ELLEN N. LA MOTTE

Edited with an introduction and biography by CYNTHIA WACHTELL

THE BACKWASH OF WAR

AN EXTRAORDINARY AMERICAN NURSE IN WORLD WAR I

VISIT…

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Ellen N. La Motte

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INTRODUCTION AND BIOGRAPHY BY
CYNTHIA WACHTELL

Johns Hopkins University Press
Baltimore

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Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper
2 4 6 8 9 7 5 3 1

Johns Hopkins University Press
2715 North Charles Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21218-4363
www.press.jhu.edu

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: La Motte, Ellen N. (Ellen Newbold), 1873–1961, author. | Wachtell, Cynthia, 1967–, editor.
Title: The backwash of war : an extraordinary American nurse in World War I / by Ellen N. La Motte ; edited with an introduction and biography by Cynthia Wachtell, editor.
Description: Baltimore : Johns Hopkins University Press, [2019] | Includes index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2018018036 | ISBN 9781421426716 (pbk. : alk. paper) | ISBN 9781421426723 (electronic) | ISBN 1421426714 (pbk. : alk. paper) | ISBN 1421426722 (electronic)
Subjects: LCSH: La Motte, Ellen N. (Ellen Newbold), 1873–1961. | World War, 1914–1918—Personal narratives. | World War, 1914–1918—Medical care—Western Front. | World War, 1914–1918—Hospitals. | World War, 1914–1918—Casualties. | Soldiers—France—History—20th century. | Nurses—United States—Biography. | Military nursing—United States—History—20th century.
Classification: LCC D640 .L2 2019 | DDC 940.4/76—dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2018018036

A catalog record for this book is available from the British Library.

Special discounts are available for bulk purchases of this book. For more information, please contact Special Sales at 410-516-6936 or specialsales@press.jhu.edu.

Johns Hopkins University Press uses environmentally friendly book materials, including recycled text paper that is composed of at least 30 percent post-consumer waste, whenever possible.

To my sons and students
They have taught me so much

The most horrible war book ever written is "The Backwash of War," by Miss Ellen La Motte, an American nurse who served with the French army. It is so bad that, when the United States entered the late war, it was suppressed by the department of justice.

—H. L. Mencken, 1927

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Acknowledgments

This volume is the fulfillment of a dream long deferred. As a graduate student in the early 1990s, I came across *The Backwash of War* during my research and was deeply disheartened that such an extraordinary work had slid into literary obscurity. A quarter of a century later, I am delighted to help bring the book to light, accompanied by Ellen N. La Motte's remarkable war essays. I am also delighted to have researched and written the first biography of its remarkable author, Ellen N. La Motte. For me, this has been a work of passion, but it has not been a solo endeavor.

I am extremely grateful to the following institutions for the use of their collections and for the many kind and helpful staff members who assisted me with my research: Alan Mason Chesney Medical Archives of the Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions; Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University; British Library; Chicago History Museum's Research Center; Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University; Library of Congress; British National Archives; Nemours Estate; New York Public Library; Royal College of Nursing Library; Schlesinger Library at the Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University; US National Archives and Records Administration; Washington and Lee University Library; Olin Library, Washington University; and Steinberg Library, Yeshiva University. I am also tremendously appreciative of those who shared with me material in their private collections. Thanks to one and all.

I owe thanks to many others as well, including the wonderful team at Johns Hopkins University Press, who helped me to realize this book. Laura Davulis, Lauren Straley, and Elizabeth Demers gave sound editorial advice and were delightfully enthusiastic. Melanie Mallon and Juliana McCarthy copyedited with great care and expert wordsmithing. I am profoundly indebted to them and their colleagues for the production of this volume. I am

also very grateful to Dean Karen Bacon, of Yeshiva University, for her understanding of my time commitment to this project, and to the organizers of two superb conferences, "World War I: Dissent, Activism, and Transformation" and "Women and World War I," where I presented portions of this work. My friends and family also offered valuable guidance and encouragement along the way and have generously understood when I vanished into the land of La Motte. Thanks most of all to Gabe, Jules, and Jeff.

Introduction

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In September 1916, as World War I advanced into a third deadly year, an American woman named Ellen N. La Motte published a collection of stories about her experience as a war nurse. She titled the volume *The Backwash of War: The Human Wreckage of the Battlefield as Witnessed by an American Hospital Nurse*. Long forgotten, this astounding book by an extraordinary woman well merits a place among major works of World War I.

The Backwash of War presents an unflinching look at the destruction done by war to the human body and spirit. La Motte based the interrelated stories on what she witnessed while working in a French field hospital in Belgium, located jarringly near the firing line. In a story midway through the book, she explains, "Well, there are many people to write you of the noble side, the heroic side, the exalted side of war. I must write you of what I have seen, the other side, the backwash."

The patients that La Motte presents are at once grotesque and pathetic. She writes of a patient slowly dying from gas gangrene, another suffering from syphilis, and a man who sobs and sobs because he does not want to die. She writes of a ten-year-old Belgian boy who has been shot through the abdomen by a fragment of German artillery shell. The French surgeon operates on him with all-too-evident irritation, and the boy's own mother impatiently sits by his side, "listening to his ravings and bawlings" as he dies.

La Motte sketches these patients and others, whose lives intersect at the field hospital. She depicts the vain doctors, overworked nurses, and lazy orderlies, who jointly care for the war-torn patients. She describes the local women and teenage girls, who prostitute themselves to soldiers and surgeons. She presents the pompous, preening generals, who arrive and perfunctorily pin medals on the "bandaged heaps . . . that once were men."

Throughout, La Motte masterfully highlights the senselessness of war and the suffering of those caught up in it. Boldly rejecting the staid conventions of wartime writing, she invents a new way of describing the human destruction she witnesses. Her tone is detached. Her sentences are clipped. Her descriptions are graphic and, at times, starkly horrific. She presents the operations—both literal and figurative—of the war hospital. And she does so with a distinctly mordant sense of humor. As one reader noted, "A strain of bitter irony running through the book eloquently testifies to the author's abhorrence of war."[1]

The Backwash of War was published simultaneously in New York and London, but it was eventually censored in both places. It was immediately suppressed in wartime England and France, but in America, the book freely circulated for nearly two years and was hailed as a stunning and unparalleled work of antiwar writing and went through multiple printings. Then in late summer 1918, it was also suppressed in the United States because it was deemed damaging to morale. Except for the book's unsuccessful re-release in late 1919 and a new edition published in 1934, which received slight notice, *The Backwash of War* virtually vanished for nearly a century.[2]

The time has come to reclaim this lost classic and restore it to its proper place among seminal works of war writing. Apart from its literary merit, *Backwash* is remarkable in several ways. It is one of the earliest antiwar works of literature about World War I, published more than a dozen years before such classics as Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929) and Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* (1929). It was written by an American *woman* who actually had firsthand experience of the war. It was published before the United States had even entered the fray. And it is one of America's few banned books of the World War I era.

This volume gathers, for the first time, all La Motte's attributed published writing about World War I. In addition to the original stories from *The Backwash of War*, it includes the new introduction and final story that La Motte added to the 1934 edition of the book, as well as three war essays that La Motte published in 1915 and 1916. In these long-forgotten works, which are at once deeply unsettling and darkly humorous, La Motte speaks directly to the reader about her experiences as a wartime nurse. In "An American Nurse in Paris" (1915), she describes volunteering early in the war in an overstaffed, mismanaged military hospital in Paris, where she first witnessed

the arrival of soldiers from the front. In "Under Shell-Fire at Dunkirk" (1915), she writes with unnerving immediacy of a fourteen-hour-long bombardment that she endured while she was en route to the field hospital in Belgium. And in "A Joy Ride" (1916), she retraces the route of a terrifying excursion she took from the field hospital that stranded her under artillery and aerial fire close to the frontline trenches. Collected here, these stories and essays present La Motte's public reaction to the war.[3] Additionally, this volume includes a chronology, which situates La Motte's nursing experience and her war writing within the broader context of World War I.

This volume also features the first biography of Ellen N. La Motte, as well as the first comprehensive list of her many dozens of publications. The accomplishments of remarkable men have long been charted and celebrated, but often overlooked are the accomplishments of equally remarkable women. La Motte is one such woman. To date, little has been written about her.[4] Drawing on a wide range of archival and other sources, including La Motte's correspondence with her friends and family, the biography aims to illuminate important facets of her life and her extraordinary accomplishments, especially in the decades leading up to *The Backwash of War*.

Not only did La Motte boldly breach decorum in writing *Backwash*, but she also forcefully challenged societal norms in other equally daring ways. Born into the extended duPont family—whose namesake business, DuPont, would become America's largest manufacturer of munitions during World War I—she utterly defied the scripted and restrained role of an American society lady. She was a trained nurse, public health advocate and administrator, lesbian, suffragist, journalist, writer, self-proclaimed anarchist, expatriate, intimate friend of the avant-garde writer Gertrude Stein, long-term partner of the American heiress Emily Crane Chadbourne, and indefatigable leader of an international anti-opium campaign. The biography shines a spotlight on the "lost" author of the "lost classic."

The following pages of this introduction are intended to familiarize readers with La Motte's war writing and its historical and literary context. The first section examines *The Backwash of War*'s publication, reception, censorship, and republication in 1934. The next section presents an overview and analysis of *Backwash* and La Motte's war essays. And the final section situates her writing within the context of works by other nurse writers, including several women who served with her in France or Belgium.

Publication, Reception, and Censorship of *The Backwash of War*

In late September 1916, roughly half a year before America entered World War I, G. P. Putnam's Sons published the first edition of *The Backwash of War*, which sold throughout the United States for $1.00 a copy.[5] One of Putnam's advertisements for the book read:

> Miss La Motte here shows us war of to-day, not magnificent and glorious, but naked and loathsome, as seen in an evacuation hospital but a few miles behind the French lines. These sketches are not cheerful reading, but they are all faithfully true, first-hand reports from the front, written in the bitterness of the moment, not by an hysterical assistant but by a trained scientist of worldwide reputation.[6]

As the war raged abroad, La Motte's work provided American readers an utterly unromantic look at the conflict. The first review appeared in *Publisher's Weekly*, explaining, "Miss La Motte has seen horror with a big H, raw, gaunt, grisly Horror, a great human shambles working overtime." The writer elaborated: "She doesn't use pretty or conventional words to describe it, and after reading the book we comfortable stay-at-homes must realize, if we have not already, the fatuity of seeking pretty or nice terms to describe this stupendous mess, Modern War."[7]

From coast to coast, the book was soon hailed as an exceptional work of war writing. The *New York Times* declared, "'The Backwash of War' literally breathes, or rather sobs, sincerity."[8] The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* noted, "The book does not make pleasant reading; but who expects that when the horrors of war are truthfully stated?"[9] And in January 1917, the *Los Angeles Times* stated, "If we were to compile an anthology of the ten best war stories about eight of them would be listed under the name of Ellen N. La Motte and credited to 'The Backwash of War.'" The reviewer approvingly added, "Nothing like [it] has been written: it is the first realistic glimpse behind the battle lines that has been offered to a neutral public. . . . Miss La Motte has described war—not merely war in France—but war itself."[10]

From the start, however, a large segment of La Motte's intended audience was denied access to her bold truth telling. Although the book freely circulated in America, it was immediately censored in England, where it had been simultaneously published.[11] At the start of the war, England had instituted

the Defense of the Realm Act, which gave the government broad power to suppress all published criticism of the war effort. A Press Bureau had been established to fill the official role of censor, and the very month of *Backwash*'s publication, September 1916, proved to be the bureau's busiest during the war.[12] Among the works the Military Room suppressed was *The Backwash of War*. (Today, an original copy of the book from 1916 can be found in the British Library's collection, but the library did not receive it until October 1919, nearly a year after the war's conclusion.)[13] At the time of its publication, *Backwash* was also suppressed in wartime France. As La Motte recorded in her introduction to the 1934 edition, "From its first appearance, this small book was kept out of England and France."

In the United States the book continued to be sold, even after the country entered the war in April 1917. In fact, the book remained in circulation even after passage of the restrictive Espionage Act of June 1917 and the Sedition Act of May 1918. Together, these acts greatly limited free speech in the United States and allowed the postmaster general to censor published works that might cause "insubordination, disloyalty, mutiny, or refusal of duty" or otherwise "embarrass or hamper the Government in conducting the war." As La Motte noted in the 1934 introduction, "By some oversight, [*Backwash*] continued to be sold, although suppression and censorship held full sway."

In fact, the book not only continued to be sold after America was at war but also continued to receive high praise. In December 1917, *Pearson's Magazine* declared, "'The Backwash of War' is surely worth reading: should in fact be read by everyone who wishes to get at the truth."[14] The following month, the journal *Issues and Events* claimed that La Motte had "rendered an invaluable service to mankind." Its writer explained, "An act of the world tragedy now being staged in Europe which has been sadly neglected by the critics writing in our daily press receives careful and intelligent treatment in Ellen La Motte's 'The Backwash of War.'"[15]

Among wartime readers, the book had detractors as well as advocates. What most reviewers saw as welcome truth telling struck others as an unwelcome and unrelenting focus on the unseemly aspects of war. A reviewer for the Wilmington, Delaware, *Morning News* objected to the "sordid" and "harrowing" pictures La Motte "painted in words," primly noting:

> There can be no question as to the extreme unpleasantness of the subjects discussed. . . . There are certain phases of life upon which it is best not to dwell and it is assumed that as she grows in experience Miss La Motte will learn that the reading public does not crave an exploitation of nastiness, but more of what is kindly and wholesome.

Clearly, some readers would have preferred a more conventional war work. Nonetheless, as even La Motte's prim critic at the *Morning News* conceded, the book "attracted considerable attention" and was, on the whole, "favorably received."[16]

On the nation's elite college campuses, *Backwash* also sparked divergent reactions. A student journalist at Vassar complained, "It presents the ugliest and most unpleasant side of war, with no apparent purpose except that of refreshing in the minds of its readers the fact that such a side exists." The student cautioned that, for some readers, the book would be "upsetting to an unwholesome degree," and she concluded, "It seems that in no case will the book do any good, and in such days as these it has no place."[17] A Harvard student adamantly disagreed. "These thirteen bitter and harrowing little sketches," he argued, "should be read by everyone desirous of seeing the war as it is." He predicted, "Miss La Motte's book will do a great deal to increase the sentiment for peace."[18]

Wartime readers generally considered the book a pacifist or antiwar work, but La Motte did not believe war could be ended, at least not in the near future. She wrote in the book's introduction, "We are witnessing a phase in the evolution of humanity, a phase called War—and the slow, onward progress stirs up the slime in the shallows, and this is the Backwash of War. It is very ugly." La Motte loathed war, but she considered it unavoidable. As she further explained, "After this war, there will be many other wars, and in the intervals there will be peace. So it will alternate for many generations." She thought that humanity would progress until, eventually, a final war would be followed by an enduring peace. Then war would cease to exist. "But not till then."

La Motte further elucidated her thoughts on the subject in a newspaper interview in May 1918:

> I have been so close to war. To me it is horrible; it is not beautiful, it is not necessarily ennobling. But I know that it has to be . . . I am not a paci-

> fist. . . . I am not even one of those people you find everywhere who are saying that this is to be the last war, the war which will end war. I don't believe that. I think we shall have wars and more wars until humanity evolves into something it is not at present. But I do not see why we should not tell the truth about war, just as we would tell it when describing the action of an earthquake or a typhoon.[19]

La Motte thought war was inescapable, at least for the present. Even so, readers insisted that her "stories that curdle the blood" presented a forceful antiwar argument.[20] As the *New York Times* book critic wrote, "Revolting—even sickening at times—Miss La Motte's book . . . is, unconsciously, a stern, strong preachment against war."[21]

Readers also consistently grouped *Backwash* with antiwar works. In July 1918, a writer for the *New World* explained, "There is a corner of my book-shelves which I call my 'T N T' library. Here are all the literary high explosives I can lay my hands on. So far there are only five of them." *Backwash* was America's sole contribution to his collection and the only work written by a woman.[22]

La Motte's book was most frequently compared to Henri Barbusse's internationally famous *Le Feu* (published in English as *Under Fire*), which was generally considered the first antiwar novel of World War I. Many readers detected a similarity between the two books. "Miss La Motte like Barbusse can touch the heart of horror when she wishes to," one critic commented.[23] Another noted that La Motte "pictures the war she sees—the physical, mental, moral slime of it—with the same frank, crusading ruthlessness Barbusse shows in his epic of war, 'Under Fire.'"[24] Even after the war, the two books remained coupled in readers' minds. In 1934 a literary scholar recalled, "'The Backwash of War' appeared in 1916 and, like 'Le Feu' of Barbusse, marked the reaction against the treatment of war in fiction as a mixture of glory, patriotism, adventure, love affairs and practical jokes, which had prevailed . . . in favor of stark realism."[25]

Backwash seemed to wartime readers to be a groundbreaking work of war writing, and its early advocates anticipated that it would be of enduring interest and importance. In January 1917 a writer for the *Masses* called the book "immortal" and explained, "It is a bitter, angry laugh at Churches, at discipline, nationalism, patriotism, at the whole military system, at the

crime and madness of War."[26] In the same issue of the *Masses*, the literary editor, Floyd Dell, named *Backwash* "The Book of the Month" and stated, "It tells unsparingly all that there is to tell—all that has never been told before." Proclaiming the work "a tremendous artistic achievement," Dell urged readers, "If you don't want to miss one of the best books written in the last ten years in the English language, you must read this book." In his estimate, the book was "more likely than any other so far produced by the war, to last beyond the war."[27]

Instead, the book did not even "last" until the end of the war. In fact, its censorship was closely linked to that of the *Masses*. In late 1917, the radical journal was forced to cease publication, and Floyd Dell, as well as several others associated with the *Masses*, were charged, under the Espionage Act, with conspiring to obstruct military conscription. A new journal, the *Liberator*, was soon launched to take the place of the *Masses*, and La Motte was one of its thirteen original contributing editors. Initially, the *Liberator*, which called itself a "journal of revolutionary progress," circulated freely. But in late summer 1918, it ran into trouble precisely because of its endorsement of *The Backwash of War*.

Beginning with its first issue, the *Liberator* had promoted the book. Indeed, in each of its first four issues—March through June 1918—the *Liberator* had touted *Backwash* without incident, by listing it as a recommended title or including it among works for sale on the "Book Shop" page. In the April issue, for example, *Backwash* appeared at the bottom of the "Book Shop" page, where it was described with just two words: "A masterpiece." Several months later, however, a similar advertisement caused the *Liberator* serious trouble. In her 1934 introduction, La Motte recalled what happened:

> An issue of *The Liberator* was held up—it could not be released until a certain objectionable passage was stamped out in black ink. This passage, it appears, was a reference to *The Backwash of War*. *The Liberator* carried a column in each issue of books specially recommended by the editor. In each issue, month after month, appeared a short paragraph of three or four lines, recommending *The Backwash of War*. So—when *The Liberator* was held up till this passage could be inked out, one suspected that something had happened to the *Backwash* itself.

> No official notice was ever sent to me. After several weeks I ventured to inquire of the publishers what had happened. The Government, it appeared, did not care for the book.

The problem was with the September 1918 issue. The book had received no mention in July or August, but in the September issue, which began circulating in August, *Backwash* appeared again on the "Book Shop" page. Squeezed into just two lines in the final column, the advertisement for it read in full: "'The Backwash of War,' by Ellen N. La Motte. What a nurse saw. $1 net."[28] (In some archived copies, though, those lines are blacked out.)

An explanation that ran in the December 1918 issue of the *Liberator* further illuminates what happened. "In August we contracted with the biggest magazine distributors in the country to put us on the newsstands," the journal's business manager states. "In September one of their Directors saw his first copy of The Liberator and found something in it that he did not like," and he refused to distribute the publication.[29] Soon thereafter the book was censored.

Up until autumn 1918, though, *The Backwash of War* had remained in free circulation and sold well. Demand for the book had been so strong that in less than two years, there were four printings. Then *Backwash* attracted the attention of the government censors—specifically the powerful postmaster general—and was suppressed. Its publisher stopped selling the book, and when La Motte protested that the stories were true, she was told, "That is exactly the trouble." As she recalled in the 1934 introduction, "The pictures presented—back of the scenes, so to speak—were considered damaging to the morale. In the flood of war propaganda pouring over the country, these dozen short sketches were considered undesirable."

Backwash was not the only wartime work to be censored, but it was one of the few books. As the *Nation*—which had an issue barred from the mails in mid-September—reported in December 1918, "During the war unaccustomed restraints have been placed on the press, on private correspondence, and on public and private speech. The public is more fully aware of the censorship exercised over newspapers and letters than of that over books; yet the latter has great interest." Elaborating on this point, the *Nation* explained,

"The postal censor also was busy. One of his victims was Ellen La Motte's 'The Backwash of War.'"[30]

That "victim" never really recovered. *Backwash* was re-released by its publisher, in both the United States and England, roughly a year after the war's conclusion. In December 1919, it appeared on a list of new books in London's *Athenaeum*, with a short review noting that the stories are "as painful to read as they are enthralling."[31] That same month, the book was promoted in an advertisement in the *Nation*, with a brief but informative description: "The government has just released this out-of-the-ordinary book. It gives you the experiences of a nurse on the battlefields."[32] But the book failed to regain momentum. During an eighteen-month period from July 1921 to January 1923, only twenty-one copies were sold, earning La Motte a mere $4.13 in royalties.[33]

In radical circles, though, the book retained a small but loyal fan base. In 1920 a writer for Cleveland's *Toiler* reminded readers, "Miss La Motte will be remembered as the author of 'The Backwash of War' which contained the most remarkable picture of war horrors ever penned. This book was suppressed 'thru fear of the effect it would have upon civilian morale.' In other words it was suppressed because it would never do for the people to learn the truth about war."[34] The same year, the *Liberator* described the book as "America's sole contribution to the real . . . honest literature of the war."[35] But as new war books appeared, attracting the literary limelight, *Backwash* slid ever further into obscurity.

Trying to gain a new readership for the work, La Motte arranged for *Backwash* to be republished in the United States in 1934. She contributed a new story to the volume as well as an updated introduction, in which she explained, "Now that we are again going through a period of peace, it seems an opportune moment for a new edition of this book." Clearly, she intended her stories to serve as a reminder to peacetime readers, lest they become too complacent and forget the horrors of war. "There can be no war," La Motte warned, "without this backwash."

When the new edition of *Backwash* appeared in August 1934, it attracted limited attention. A few book critics simply borrowed from La Motte's new introduction and recounted the facts of the work's unusual history. The *New York Times*, for example, briefly explained, "It was forbidden to bring this

book into England and France during the World War, and after four printings in this country it was suppressed at the request of the United States Government."[36]

In a longer and far more enthusiastic review, the nationally syndicated columnist of the Literary Guidepost described a few of the stories, then commented, "The pieces should be read by those who talk of the glory of war."[37] In another version of the review, he added, "It is a book which tells the truth about war, not with the help of statistics and facts about national movements, but with the help of art." Then he concluded with three short and powerful sentences. "The stories are beautifully written. They are terrible. But they will do good."[38]

Other readers also thought the book contained an important message for contemporary readers. An editor at the *New Republic* wrote, "[*Backwash*] was suppressed by a complacent publisher at the behest of the government, on the ground that it would weaken the will to war. Its reappearance should do just that."[39] A couple of years later, another journalist commented, "[This] is not a book for pacifists, but for pro-war people. . . . Anyone who, after reading this book, now republished, can still stand for war, is a degenerated heathen though he may profess with great ardor to be a Christian."[40]

Overall, though, the new edition of the book attracted few readers and gained little traction in the literary marketplace. By the mid-1930s Americans seem to have grown tired of the subject of World War I and, perhaps, resented La Motte's implicit warning about future conflicts.

The Stories

On the pages of *The Backwash of War*, La Motte essentially reinvents the rules for war writing. Her stories, which she gradually completed between December 1915 and June 1916, defy wartime conventions and explore topics typically hidden from public view. She leads her reader into the hospital wards and even into the operating room, where sweat pours from the brows of the surgeons, and patients lose their limbs and even their lives. As the literary scholar Charles V. Genthe aptly observed, "By any standard, [*Backwash*] is the most bitterly disillusioned of all of the 1914–1918 narratives."[41]

With a couple of exceptions, the stories in *Backwash* are written from the perspective of an unnamed nurse, stationed in a French field hospital in

Belgium, which is located ten kilometers behind the battlefront. Each story focuses on a particular patient, incident, or staff member, but the stories are also closely interlinked. The patients come and go—either sent home disabled, sent back to the front patched up, or sent to the local cemetery—but the director, doctors, nurses, and orderlies remain and reappear. All the while, all too audibly and dangerously nearby, the war continues to be waged.

"Heroes," the first story, concerns a failed suicide. It bluntly begins, "When he could stand it no longer, he fired a revolver up through the roof of his mouth, but he made a mess of it. The ball tore out his left eye, and then lodged somewhere under his skull, so they bundled him into an ambulance and carried him, cursing and screaming, to the nearest field hospital." At the hospital, the soldier is skillfully operated on. But he is considered a deserter for attempting to kill himself, and his life will be saved only so that he can later be court martialed and executed by a firing squad. As La Motte explains, he will be "nursed back to health, until he [is] well enough to be stood up against a wall and shot."

War, in La Motte's words and in her wards, is bloody and appalling. Conventional war writers highlighted heroism, both in the theater of war and in the operating theater. They presented model soldiers and model patients. From the very first lines of "Heroes," La Motte boldly challenges these norms. The soldier who has attempted suicide behaves "abominably" at the field hospital. It requires "a dozen leather straps and four or five orderlies to hold him in position." And he spits "great clots of stagnant blood." One lands on the immaculate uniform of the hospital director, staining her "from breast to shoes."

In "Heroes," La Motte thus quickly disabuses her reader of any romantic notions of war. She intersperses the first paragraphs of the story with a series of short declarative sentences. "This is War." "It was disgusting." "Truly it was disgusting."

"Heroes" also highlights the paradoxical role of the war nurse, who must attempt to preserve life amid an inferno of destruction. Given the ways of war, where does her true duty to her patients lie? Should she help mend men so that they can be returned to the trenches? Will doing so make her complicit in war's destructive process? And what about the man who attempted

suicide? In a passage full of sharp sarcasm, La Motte explains the contradictions inherent to her role:

> By expert surgery, by expert nursing, some of these [wounded men] were to be returned to their homes again, *réformés*, mutilated for life, a burden to themselves and to society; others were to be nursed back to health, to a point at which they could again shoulder eighty pounds of marching kit, and be torn to pieces again on the firing line. It was a pleasure to nurse such as these. It called forth all one's skill, all one's humanity. But to nurse back to health a man who was to be court-martialled and shot, truly that seemed a dead-end occupation.

Returning to the same subject a few paragraphs later, she asks, "Wherein lay the difference? Was it not all a dead-end occupation, nursing back to health men to be patched up and returned to the trenches, or a man to be patched up, court-martialled and shot?" To these dangerous questions, La Motte provides a lofty answer. Parroting the war rhetoric of the day, she writes, "The difference lay in the Ideal." After all, the war is being waged for "cherished ideals," for "courageous dreams of freedom and patriotism." But La Motte is obviously not convinced. Nursing in wartime, as her pointed pun suggests, is fundamentally a "dead-end occupation." Even more heretically, she suggests that waging war itself is a dead-end occupation.

La Motte's nurse narrator refuses to see the war through rose-colored glasses. Instead, she sees the war as a vast tragedy and takes note of the foibles of those around her. The general bestows medals in a perfunctory fashion. The orderlies drink wine together at the far end of a ward, as an unattended patient dies. And the hospital's director left behind her own young children in faraway England, yet she finds a Belgian mother insufficiently maternal.

Whereas other war writers laud the bravery of the wounded and highlight their selflessness and stoicism, La Motte paints a very different picture of these men. In the ironically titled "Heroes," she describes the "pitiful" and "irritating" soldiers who share a hospital ward with the man who attempted suicide. For example, there is selfish Alexandre, who smokes, even though it violently nauseates the patient in the next bed, and there is "poor, querulous, feeble-minded Félix," who has a foul-smelling fistula and spends his

time trimming, combing, and twirling his moustache. These men who fill the hospital ward demonstrate no heroic or noble qualities. Instead, they seem "so ignoble, so petty, so commonplace."

"Heroes," which first appeared in *Atlantic Monthly* in August 1916, is in keeping with the volume's other tales of futile hospital operations, foul bodies, and filthy deaths. From first to last, La Motte's stories have no heroes in the conventional sense of the word. In fact, the most heroic soldier in *Backwash* is a thief from Paris, who appears in "A Citation." He belongs to the despised Bataillon d'Afrique, a regiment of convicts impressed into war service. Mortally wounded, he patiently tolerates the medical experimentation of his fame-seeking surgeon, as his life is needlessly prolonged, and his pain needlessly "enhanced a hundredfold," during what La Motte calls "months of torture."

In the romantic works of legions of war writers, men willingly fight and die for their nation. Not so in La Motte's work. In her story "Pour la Patrie," a priest forces a dying soldier to say, "God, I give you my life freely for my country." But the soldier has the last word. The story ends with his declaration, "I was mobilized against my inclination. Now I have won the *Médaille Militaire*. My Captain won it for me. He made me brave. He had a revolver in his hand." Indeed, each of La Motte's stories ends with a twist that points to the inanity of the war, the egotism of those in power, or the powerlessness of those whose lives have been irreversibly destroyed.

La Motte was a socialist and an avowed anarchist, and repeatedly in her stories, common men—turned into common soldiers—unwillingly suffer and die for a cause in which they have no vested interest. These men are forced into the trenches and forced to remain there. They show no eagerness to fight and no readiness to die, but they are powerless to resist the juggernaut of war. This is true for the French soldiers who fill the wards of the field hospital, and it is equally true for the German soldiers, who fight against them. Notably, the story "Heroes" ends with one French soldier asking another, "Dost thou know, *mon ami*, that when we captured that German battery a few days ago, we found the gunners chained to their guns?"

With savage irony, La Motte exposes the fundamental lack of egalitarianism in French military service. In "Women and Wives," she writes, "Ah yes, France is democratic. It is the Nation's war, and all the men of the Nation, regardless of rank, are serving. But some serve in better places than others.

The trenches are mostly reserved for men of the working class, which is reasonable, as there are more of them." France's national motto, which La Motte quotes in the story, is "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity." Yet these very values, she notes, are conspicuously absent in France's military. She shows that men with influential connections can pull strings to receive safe posts, like a hospital orderly named Fouquet, who is introduced in "The Hole in the Hedge." He is six feet tall, twenty-five years old, ruddy, and strong. Yet for him there is "no danger, no front line trenches." Meanwhile, the wounded and ill soldiers, whom he sullenly cares for with "intentional clumsiness," are "old men of forty and forty-five" and look "very much older." They deeply resent Fouquet and call him a shirker.

The weight of the war, as La Motte makes unmistakably clear, falls disproportionately on the sagging shoulders of disempowered working-class men. They are the ones wounded in the trenches. They are the ones who become sick from extended exposure to the cold winter rain. They are the ones who arrive at the hospital in the backs of ambulances.

Through focusing on these common men whose lives are devastated by the war, La Motte reveals the cataclysm at a human level. The drafted soldiers at the center of her stories may have foul mouths and foul bodies, but they are also all victims. In "La Patrie Reconnaissante," a Parisian taxi driver lies slowly dying a "filthy death," after being struck in the belly by a German shell. In "Alone," a thirty-nine-year-old gardener, a widow with one child, lies dying, with an inch of shell lodged in his fractured skull and "his torn-out thigh" infected with gas gangrene. And in "The Interval," a half-paralyzed man, dying of meningitis, sobbingly protests that he does not want to die. The war, La Motte shows, is built on the ugly suffering of these and other distinctly unexceptional men.

Even more disturbing, La Motte shows that the war is also built on the ugly suffering of noncombatants, including children. In "A Belgian Civilian," a ten-year-old boy, fatally wounded by a German shell, is brought to the field hospital, where he is considered an "imposition." A French doctor resentfully performs a futile operation. Afterward, the wounded French soldiers in the boy's ward indignantly listen to him bawl, until he dies in the middle of the night. La Motte ironically comments, "In war, civilians are cheap things at best, and an immature civilian, Belgian at that, is very cheap." But her true message is clear. An innocent life is lost, and apart from

a sentimental nurse and the concerned director of the hospital, the war seems indifferent to the child's death.

Similarly, in "An Incident," a teenage boy is grievously injured in a traffic accident in Paris, when his overloaded delivery wagon collides with a horse-drawn cab. As a crowd quickly gathers, the distinguished military officer riding in the cab, who is on his way to the War Ministry, leans back and twirls his moustache, completely unmoved by the boy's screaming and sobbing. Although the incident takes place far from the battlefront, La Motte's message is clear. Those who run the war are disturbingly unmoved by suffering.

In "A Surgical Triumph," La Motte focuses on civilian loss from another perspective. The story centers on a Parisian hairdresser, who has built a good life for himself, his wife, and his teenage son. The boy is learning the art of washing, curling, and drying hair and has "a good future before him." But then the chubby youth is drafted, "forced to fight for his glorious country," and gravely wounded. After multiple months in the hospital and multiple operations, he is proclaimed "a surgical triumph" and at last sent home. There, the hairdresser is anguished to discover that the "surgical triumph" is actually a blind, mangled, and miserable quadruple amputee.

Decades later, the American author Dalton Trumbo would write a haunting novel, *Johnny Got His Gun* (1939), narrated from the perspective of a terribly wounded World War I soldier, who is a quadruple amputee and also blind, deaf, and mute. "If the book is any good at all it is good as an argument against war," Trumbo explained.[42] But La Motte was the first World War I writer to imagine the suffering of a quadruple amputee, and her depiction of the wrenching scene in which the father and sobbing son are reunited presents its own powerful condemnation of war.

In "A Surgical Triumph" and elsewhere, La Motte forcefully reminds her readers that the victims of war are not only the men wounded and killed on the battlefield but also their loved ones. In the shortest story in the collection, "At the Telephone," a man, whose body is "stone cold and ashen grey," lies on an operating table with a "ten-thousandth chance" of survival. He is given spinal anesthesia, and as a surgeon vainly struggles to save his life, the patient reminisces about his home and his wife. La Motte writes, "He talked about her incessantly, and with affection." As La Motte here makes clear, war destroys not just men but also marriages, creating legions of war widows.

War affects marriages in other ways, too, as La Motte reveals in "Women and Wives." The French military bans wives from the war zone, she explains, because they bring with them the worries of home and are "bad for the morale of the Army." Yet, the French military permits other women, who "cheer and refresh the troops." La Motte wryly notes, "Of course the professional prostitutes from Paris aren't admitted to the War Zone, but the Belgian girls made such fools of themselves, the others weren't needed." Military policy thus essentially fosters infidelity.

Prim wartime writers studiously avoided making any mention of sex, but La Motte exposes the uncomfortable truth that local women, and even teenage girls, prostituted themselves to military men. The hospital's "little fat" purveyor commandeers an ambulance nightly to sleep with a woman twelve miles away. Likewise, an old doctor, who is sixty-four years old and has grandchildren, regularly visits "a little girl of fourteen" in the local village. Even a priest who works at the hospital regularly slips "down to the village to spend the night with a girl."

La Motte wanted her readers to understand that the social disruptions and displacements of wartime have ugly consequences that are often directly at odds with war rhetoric about protecting women and children. As she so effectively shows, war is corrosive to the institution of marriage and leads to the "ruin" of countless unmarried women and girls. She writes, "After the war, it is hoped that all unmarried soldiers will marry, but doubtless they will not marry these women who have served and cheered them in the War Zone."

The candor with which La Motte addressed the topic of soldiers and sex was radically daring during the war years. By contrast, most wartime writers insisted that the soldiers' experience was morally ennobling. For example, in *Fighting France* (1915), the eminent American novelist Edith Wharton writes of the French soldiers, "It is as though all 'nervosity,' fussiness, little personal oddities, meanness and vulgarities, had been burnt away in a great flame of self-dedication." In the far trenches, Wharton states, are the Germans, "the men who had made the war." In the near trenches are the French soldiers, "the men who had been made by it."[43] But in La Motte's telling, the war was far from redemptive.

Time and again in her stories, La Motte focuses on subjects that are unsavory and unmentioned in typical wartime works. Her story "Locomotor Ataxia" is another excellent example. It presents a soldier who has gradually

lost his ability to walk. As he demonstrates his disability, "moving with uncertain, running, halting steps," his fellow patients titter and snigger. They all know his diagnosis. The inability to control one's bodily movements—*locomotor ataxia*—is a signature symptom of late-stage syphilis.

In her stories La Motte reveals what other authors concealed, and she even manages to make the horror and suffering at the frontline hospital seem repetitive and disturbingly routine. In "The Interval," she writes, "This is the day of an attack. Yesterday was the day of an attack. The day before was the day of an attack." She explains that the ward is filled with "men, grey and bearded, dying in our clean beds, wetting our clean sheets with the blood that oozes from their dressings." Then she adds, "When they die, we will pull off the bloody sheets, and replace them with fresh, clean ones, and turn them back neatly, waiting for the next agonizing man." The war, in La Motte's rendition, is tedious and absurdly repetitious. The ambulance drivers deliver their bloody loads. The patients die quickly or slowly. A dapper general appears periodically to affix medals to the hospital gowns of those who will survive and return home missing limbs, so that they can pass as war heroes on the streets of Paris and inspire the masses. Brutally cynical and utterly unsentimental, La Motte's writing little resembles that of conventional wartime authors, especially women writers. As the *Detroit Journal* noted in early 1917, "The women who have penetrated the war zone and have written alone have used the bleeding pen. It remained for a woman, Ellen LaMotte, . . . to draw the real portrait of the ravaging beast."[44] Whereas other women composed works brimming with sentimentality and sympathy, La Motte recounted matters of life and death from a seemingly dispassionate remove. Of the boy in "A Belgian Civilian," she explains, "It was a hopeless case. . . . The child would die without an operation, or he would die during the operation, or he would die after the operation." Of the wounded man in "Pour la Patrie," she writes, "So the third day dawned, and he was alive, and dying, and knew that he was dying. Which is unusual and disconcerting." And of a trio of patients in "The Interval," she comments, "It will be better when they die. The German shells have made them ludicrous, repulsive."

La Motte's writing is graphic and irreverent and experimental all at once, and it was likely influenced by the highly innovative work of the author

Gertrude Stein, who was an intimate friend of La Motte's during the war. Describing a soldier in "The Interval," La Motte writes, "Meningitis has set in and it won't be long now, before we'll have another empty bed. Yellow foam flows down his nose, thick yellow foam, bubbles of it, bursting, bubbling yellow foam. It humps up under his nose, up and up, in bubbles, and the bubbles burst and run in turgid streams down upon his shaggy beard." The wordplay and repetition is reminiscent of Stein's work, but in *Backwash*, La Motte uses it to shape a new type of war writing with a distinctly cynical sensibility.

It was a sensibility that gained tremendous traction after the war, in the disillusioned writing of what Stein dubbed the "lost generation." Indeed, La Motte's stories are written in the detached, jaded style that would come to define World War I literature in the postwar period. As Hazel Hutchison incisively notes in *The War That Used Up Words*, "Nothing quite like *The Backwash of War* had been written in English before. It was the text that first caught the distinctive note of the conflict, and demonstrated how its brutality and pathos could be handled in prose."[45] In short, La Motte modeled for postwar writers a new way of writing war.

On the pages of *Backwash* she frequently strings together declarative sentences, drained of emotion and neutral in tone, in which the underlying horror goes unacknowledged, just as Ernest Hemingway would later do in his own war writing. She writes in the story "Alone,"

> They could not operate on Rochard and amputate his leg, as they wanted to do. The infection was so high, into the hip, it could not be done. Moreover, Rochard had a fractured skull as well. Another piece of shell had pierced his ear, and broken into his brain, and lodged there. Either wound would have been fatal, but it was the gas gangrene in his torn-out thigh that would kill him first. The wound stank. It was foul.

Hemingway, famous for his blunt and clipped sentences, clearly had a forerunner. Indeed, La Motte's prose style might well have influenced Hemingway's. In the early 1920s Gertrude Stein's literary salon attracted many of the emerging postwar writers. Among those who sought Stein's advice was Hemingway, whose style she significantly influenced.[46] Perhaps Stein showed Hemingway her copy of *Backwash* as an example of admirable war

writing. Or perhaps she simply passed along what she had learned from reading La Motte's work.[47]

La Motte even anticipated the sensibility of much later war writers, including the World War II novelist Joseph Heller. In *Backwash* she uses biting humor to expose the illogic and perverse absurdity of war and military regulations, just as Heller does in *Catch-22* (1961), a work that also begins in a military hospital. In fact, the literary scholar Eric Solomon argues that La Motte's story "La Patrie Reconnaissante" contains "all the elements of *Catch-22*'s hospital scenes."[48]

Similarly, *Backwash*, with its prevailing tone of detached resignation, anticipates Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969). In "Women and Wives," La Motte writes, "You speak of the young aviator who was decorated for destroying a Zeppelin single-handed, and in the next breath you add, and he killed himself, a few days later, by attempting to fly when he was drunk. So it goes." More than half a century later, Vonnegut pointed out similar absurdities and incongruities when writing about World War II. And the simple catchphrase he used throughout his book, each time he mentioned a death, was "So it goes."

In many ways, La Motte was a writer ahead of her time, and her stories little resemble the works other authors published during World War I. She wrote about suicidal soldiers, syphilis, and the sex lives of sexagenarians. She wrote, in the words of her book's subtitle, about the "human wreckage of the battlefield" that she had witnessed.

La Motte certainly was not inclined to humor readers who preferred war works awash with sympathy and kindness, but she did eventually make a small concession to those who wished for lighter fare. Or so she claimed. When *Backwash* was republished in 1934, she added a story titled "Esmeralda." It begins,

> People often say to me, you are quite morbid about the war, about your experiences in the War Zone. Surely, surely, in all those long months, you must have seen something that was not grim and horrible—something that was noble, or inspiring, or amusing, something that was human. . . . So now I will tell you about Esmeralda, so that you won't think I have a quite morbid mind, unable to see anything but tragedy, unable to recognize nice things when I see them.

As for Esmeralda, suffice it to say that she is a beloved pet goat that ends up served for dinner. Even at her cheeriest, La Motte clearly had a gallows sense of humor.

War, according to La Motte, was repugnant and repulsive, and it was especially so when seen from the vantage point of a war nurse. At end of the 1934 introduction, she writes, "Much ugliness is churned up in the wake of mighty, moving forces, and this is the backwash of war. Many little lives foam up in this backwash, loosened by the sweeping current, and detached from their environment. One catches a glimpse of them—often weak, hideous or repellent." Then La Motte concludes with an equally disquieting assertion: "There can be no war without this backwash."

The War Essays

The three essays La Motte published under her name in 1915 and 1916 help illuminate her wartime experience as well as her broad outlook on the conflict. She appears in them at three distinct junctures in her work as a war nurse: first, while she was living in Paris and volunteering in a large military hospital in late 1914; second, while she was en route to the field hospital in Belgium and experienced a traumatic bombardment in June 1915; and third, while she was working at the field hospital and took a terrifying "joy ride" in May 1916. In the essays La Motte writes in the first person, speaking directly to the reader. At times she is self-mocking. At times she mocks others. But underlying every word is a bitter recognition of the tragedy of war.

In "An American Nurse in Paris," La Motte sketches her initial exposure to the war. The conflict was just a couple of months old when she traveled from New York to France to volunteer at an American-supported military hospital in Paris. In the essay, La Motte gives a candid account of her impressions of that hospital, where she began working on November 7, 1914.

She found the hospital well funded and well equipped but scandalously mismanaged and underutilized. "The waste is manifest on all sides, waste of time, energy, service, effort, money," she wrote. "There is an abundance, a superfluity, of everything." This waste of resources particularly galled La Motte because she knew that elsewhere wounded and sick men were suffering, even dying, for want of supplies and adequate surgical and nursing care. She recorded, "English nurses come in from the front from time to time and tell us of the conditions in the field hospitals, where the patients

are brought in by the hundreds, day after day. . . . They tell us tales of the wounded outnumbering the nurses two hundred to one." By contrast, at the hospital, the attendants outnumbered the patients by nearly two to one.

At the hospital, La Motte saw wounded soldiers arriving from the front, and her initial shock registers clearly on the page. She describes several "grievously wounded" soldiers she encountered her first day. In a striking phrase, she refers to them as "dirty, muddy, bloody little heaps of humanity." Treating men such as these was a new and disturbing experience for La Motte, who had trained and worked in urban hospitals, and whose area of expertise was tuberculosis care. She saw the men's faces "contorted with pain and suffering." She saw their dreadful wounds and smelled their putrid bodies. One new arrival had a "shattered leg, swollen and gangrenous." Another had a "hand with the palm torn off, and horribly infected." A third, who had been "struck in the back by a piece of bursting shrapnel," had spent a month lying in a field hospital with a fecal fistula and was emaciated and "filthy beyond words to describe." La Motte hauntingly records, "I saw the awful mutilation wrought by bullet and shrapnel."

War is wasteful, La Motte shows. It wastes time, energy, money, and material resources, but more profoundly and painfully, it wastes men. She admires the fortitude of the patients, who entered the war "young, strong, able-bodied and in the prime of life." But she grimly notes that few of them will return to the army or easily return to their peacetime occupations. Of those who survive, most will have a "prolonged and tedious" convalescence, and a "great proportion [will be] crippled or mutilated for life."

War is also darkly humorous, at least in La Motte's account, where tragedy and comedy often converge. In "An American Nurse in Paris," the humor is largely at the expense of the auxiliaries—society girls and other women who volunteer at the hospital. These untrained helpers are of little assistance and sometimes are "a positive menace" to the patients. The volunteer orderlies, the male counterparts of the auxiliaries, are no better. One rich American orderly outright refuses to assist La Motte in irrigating a patient's wound. "I'd do anything I could for the dear fellow," he insists, "but I really can't do that, it's too disagreeable." La Motte tries to reason with him, but he demurs. "It's very disagreeable," he repeats, "I really must refuse."

"An American Nurse in Paris" appeared in a July 1916 issue of *Survey: A Journal of Constructive Philanthropy*, published in New York, and it soon drew a rebuttal. In a letter to the editor, the hospital's chairman refuted La Motte's accusations of mismanagement and noted that La Motte had only served at the hospital "for a period of about three weeks in November, 1914." He then quoted an official report by an American surgeon, who gave a positive review of the hospital's operations—both surgical and organizational.[49] However, the surgeon had assessed the hospital long after La Motte's departure.

Mysteriously, another essay about the hospital in Paris, "Experiences in the American Ambulance Hospital, Neuilly, France," was quite clearly written by La Motte, yet she is not identified as its author in the *American Journal of Nursing*, where the essay was published in April 1915. Instead, the supposed authors of the essay are listed rather cryptically as K. K. and M. E. H.[50] Even so, the essay overlaps with "An American Nurse in Paris" to such an extent, and so unmistakably reflects La Motte's unique style and sensibility, that she is undoubtedly its actual author. The essay is not included in this volume, because of space constraints and lack of attribution to La Motte, but it merits brief discussion here.

Many of the same individuals and incidents appear in both essays about the Paris hospital. For example, the orderly assigned to La Motte's ward who refuses to assist her in "An American Nurse in Paris" with a "certain difficult dressing" also appears in "Experiences in the American Ambulance Hospital," where he refuses to help with a "a particularly loathsome dressing." He says in one essay, "I'd do anything I could for the dear fellow." He says in the other, "I'd do *anything* for the dear boys." And in both essays, he shows patients photographs of his château in northern France, declaring, "*This* is where your orderly lives." Even the italics are the same. These and numerous other overlaps unmistakably point to the essays' shared authorship.[51]

"Experiences in the American Ambulance Hospital" also clearly displays La Motte's dark humor as well as her utter antipathy for war. At one point, the essay's narrator even declares, "But I find, as we run through these humorous episodes, that there is not one of them without its undercurrent of horror." Of course, this undercurrent—or backwash—of horror is the

true focus in all of La Motte's war writing. And in the passage of the essay that most directly condemns the war, La Motte's distinctive voice rings clearly:

> The trains of wounded [soldiers] are often delayed by being sidetracked to let the fresh troops go through to the front. That seems barbaric, you say? Certainly, it is barbaric. War never was better than the uttermost horror of barbarism, and this war today is more brutal than any that has gone before it. We are sadly perfected in machinery to mutilate our men en masse. En masse, we bring them back and heal them with our expert knowledge, born of civilization, only to hurl them forward again to the firing line that they may go through their agony once more; this time facing pain every detail of whose infinite torture is vividly familiar to them through the touch of their own personal anguish.

The writing style, word choice, and sentiments here, and throughout the essay, are rather unmistakably La Motte's. Why, then, was the piece published without her name affixed to it?

The answer seems fairly clear. When the essay was published in April 1915, La Motte was desperately trying to find a nursing position at the front, and she likely worried that being known as the author of "Experiences in the American Ambulance Hospital" would hurt her chances. After all, the essay is bluntly critical of not only the hospital in Paris but also the war as a whole. Significantly, La Motte published "An American Nurse in Paris" under her own name, in July 1915, only after she had finally found a place at the front. And that essay's publication did, indeed, ruffle feathers. "Miss La Motte's article in the Survey has upset the whole American colony at Neuilly," an observer in Paris reported.[52]

The next of La Motte's war essays included in this volume, "Under Shell-Fire at Dunkirk," focuses on a terrifying bombardment La Motte experienced in June 1915, when she was en route to the field hospital in Belgium. Along with several other nurses, she traveled from Paris to Dunkirk, a port city in northern France, where they were supposed to stay for a few days, in a hotel outside town. Unfortunately, their stay proved unexpectedly harrowing. During the second night, German forces launched a long-range artillery bombardment of Dunkirk. La Motte watched from the hotel's balcony as shells plunged into the town. It was her first experience of

shellfire, and several hours later, believing the attack was over, she ventured into Dunkirk, filled "with an overwhelming curiosity to see the town, to know what damage had been caused by [the] tremendous shells." But she had made a serious mistake. She writes, "Suddenly I realized, in a flash, that we were entering the town . . . between intervals of bombardment! A sickening sense of fear, of nervous dread, passed over me."

On the pages of "Under Shell-Fire at Dunkirk," La Motte presents an unusually candid description of the "cold terror" felt by a noncombatant during a bombardment. She admits that she was nearly paralyzed with fear when she found herself stranded on the streets of Dunkirk as shells began to fall. She eventually took shelter in the cellar of a "crumpled" house destroyed months earlier, where a man, his wife, and their "two ragged children" now lived. But she was not yet out of danger.

The essay thus charts La Motte's initiation into the war zone. She writes, "For the first time I saw war in the concrete, saw the havoc wrought by those awful guns." The sentence seems to echo one in "An American Nurse in Paris," where she describes her initiation into war nursing: "Here for the first time, I saw wounded soldiers brought in from the front." So, too, it seems to echo her statement in that essay: "I saw the awful mutilation wrought by bullet and shrapnel." Before the first year of World War I was over, La Motte had seen the damage war wrought to humans and to homes. She had seen the crumpled bodies and crumpled buildings—and in her war essays, she did not prettify or romanticize what she observed.

On its final page, "Under Shell-Fire at Dunkirk" achieves an unexpected and unnerving immediacy. Up to this point, La Motte describes the events of the day using the past tense. For example, she writes, "We were in the direct line of fire," and "Shells began falling again during lunch." The bombardment seems to have been a traumatic experience, from which La Motte safely emerged. But four paragraphs from the essay's end, she suddenly shifts from the past to the present tense. "So here we are," she states. "We are in the direct line of fire." La Motte has returned to the "flimsy little hotel" and now sits with the other nurses on the balcony. It is late afternoon, and the shells "are falling nearer and nearer." There is no cellar in which to hide, and the act of writing becomes La Motte's distraction from the "terrible tension." She admits, "I am writing this to kill time; yet as each shell strikes I spring to the window, and my chair falls backwards, while the others laugh."

The essay, the reader suddenly realizes, is not a description of past events but a description of present events. La Motte is writing to "kill time" as she experiences an attack that could kill her. The bombardment is ongoing, at least on the pages of the essay, and the reader is left in a state of limbo. The final sentence reads, "And so we sit on the balcony and watch the bursting shells—and wait."

"Under Shell-Fire at Dunkirk" was published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in November 1915. An abridged version also appeared in *War Readings*, an anthology of poetry and prose published in 1918. Interestingly, the preface to that book explains, "Horrors and details of suffering have been omitted as out of place in a volume intended for use in schools."[53] The children of America, it seems, were to be shown only a sanitized version of the war. Nevertheless, La Motte's intention was always to show her readers those very horrors and details of suffering. With what one admirer described as her "terse, vivid style," La Motte bravely revealed—in her essays, as in her stories—the many dimensions of the "havoc wrought" by war.[54]

Her final war essay, "A Joy Ride," also printed in the *Atlantic Monthly,* appeared in October 1916, soon after the release of *The Backwash of War*. In it La Motte details a terrifying experience she had in late May 1916, when she arranged to accompany a fellow nurse at the field hospital on a "joy ride." They were to be driven to the town of Poperinghe, five kilometers away, where the other nurse hoped to visit a nephew serving in the Canadian forces. They arrived safely in Poperinghe—a place "splintered, gashed, and bitten, from end to end"—but learned that the nephew was actually posted near Ypres. The very name of that Belgian town, where two major battles had already been fought, petrified La Motte. Nonetheless, they set off to find the nephew, but as they approached Ypres, they came under shell-fire attack. Then a German bomber appeared overhead, and La Motte took shelter with some soldiers in a wooden hut, as antiaircraft guns burst into action. Her "joy ride" had turned out to be anything but joyful. She survived physically unharmed but thoroughly shaken.

Although her tone throughout the essay is gently self-mocking, La Motte clearly conveys in its pages her horror of war. She explains, "I am not naturally what one would call brave, and since last summer, after our fourteen-hour bombardment in Dunkirk, the sight of a shelled town makes me feel quite sick." But despite her best efforts, and in fulfillment of her worst fears,

La Motte again found herself under attack. She remained outwardly calm and "acted just the same" as the soldiers around her. Yet, when she wrote about the events, La Motte refused to put on a similarly brave face. Instead, she publicly declared, "I hate shells and am desperately afraid of them. It is so refreshing to admit the truth."

Through her refreshing truth telling, La Motte proved herself a daring war writer, and nowhere is she bolder than in a passage in "A Joy Ride," in which she compares soldiers to animals led to slaughter. As she rode toward Ypres, La Motte passed a huge encampment of "many thousands of soldiers *en repos*, released for two weeks from the trenches, to rest." She explains that their bare and dirty huts looked "just like animal pens, in which animals wait to be slaughtered." Then she pushes the analogy further and writes, "Only the lounging soldiers did not seem like animals awaiting slaughter, or perhaps they were unconscious of their fate, just like animals." It was not a new analogy. Other authors in the past, including Herman Melville and Walt Whitman, had compared the carnage of combat to butchery and likened war to a vast slaughterhouse. Other authors would do so in the future. In the late 1920s Ernest Hemingway would famously write of World War I, "I had seen nothing sacred, and the things that were glorious had no glory and the sacrifices were like the stockyards at Chicago if nothing was done with the meat except to bury it."[55] Decades later, Kurt Vonnegut would title his seminal World War II novel *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969). But to liken soldiers to animals awaiting slaughter was a radically daring comparison for La Motte to make *during* World War I.

In short, in the essays in this volume, La Motte publicly speaks in her own voice, as she encounters the impact of war in the military hospital in Paris, in bomb-shattered Dunkirk, and behind the frontlines near Ypres. Her essays are at once harrowing and humorous. She is as ready to laugh at herself as to laugh at others, as she masterfully teases mirth out of grim circumstances. But she never lets her readers forget that the war is fundamentally a tragedy. Describing how she felt when she emerged from the cellar in Dunkirk, during a brief break in the bombardment, she writes, "It was like walking in a nightmare, dragging leaden legs, with the terror that comes with dreams." War, according to La Motte, was like a long nightmare from which the world had yet to awaken.

Ellen N. La Motte and Other Nurse Writers

Ellen N. La Motte was far from a typical World War I writer. She was a woman from what was still a neutral country, who had firsthand experience of the war zone. She focused on war's horrors rather than its heroes. She wrote during the war and was censored during the war. No one else was quite like her, just as no other book was quite like *The Backwash of War*. Even so, it is helpful to consider her war stories and essays in the context of other works about World War I, especially those by other nurse writers. Remarkably, several nurses who worked alongside La Motte, at the hospital in Paris or at the field hospital in Belgium, also published books about the war. Their works in particular provide valuable information about La Motte's wartime experience and the patients she tended.

The nurses who volunteered in World War I collectively crafted a considerable body of war writing. They ranged from Vera Brittain, whose well-known memoir, *Testament of Youth* (1933), was recently made into a feature film, to a great many lesser-known writers. Indeed, works by World War I nurses, especially war diaries, continue to be found and published, including *Dorothea's War: The Diaries of a First World War Nurse* (2013), *A Nurse at the Front: The First World War Diaries of Sister Edith Appleton* (2012), and *The War Diary of Clare Gass, 1915–1918* (2000). In these and countless works of prose, and occasionally poetry, Word War I nurses recorded their thoughts about their patients and about the conflict.[56]

It is especially interesting to see how other nurses, who published during the war years, described the sick and shattered men in their care because their patients seem so markedly different from those La Motte presents in *Backwash*. For example, a British elementary school teacher, who volunteered as a nurse, wrote of her patients, "The men come practically straight from the trenches, and are deeply grateful for, and appreciative of, the cosy beds, the nicely-cooked food, the absence of vermin, the cleanliness and brightness of the wards, and our attempt to make them comfortable and happy."[57] Similarly, the anonymous author of *Diary of a Nursing Sister on the Western Front, 1914–1915* (1915) had nothing but praise for the wounded men in her care. She worked on an ambulance train that transported soldiers from a clearing hospital, located right behind the frontline, to base hospitals. Describing a trainload of 368 men evacuated from the front in late

October 1914, during the First Battle of Ypres, she noted, "a good 200 were dangerously and seriously wounded, perhaps more." But she emphasized their fortitude and good spirits: "The outstanding shining thing that hit you in the eye all through was the universal silent pluck of the men; they stuck it all without a whine or complaint or even a comment." The wounded men, she insisted, had "an entire lack of resentment about their own injuries."[58] By contrast, their counterparts in *Backwash* loudly rant and rail against their fate. Or they bawl and sob like children.

The radicalness of La Motte's depiction of wounded soldiers—as fearful of death and fretful in life—comes into stark relief when her work is compared with those of her nursing peers. Indeed, a remarkably upbeat article about the very field hospital where La Motte worked appeared in the *British Journal of Nursing* in September 1916 (the same month *Backwash* was published and banned in England). The article insists, "All English nurses who have had the privilege to nurse among the French soldiers know what wonderful patience and endurance the French [soldiers] have always shown—there never were such patients. Never a murmur—always plucky and wonderfully cheerful."[59] These perpetually "plucky" patients seem to belong to an entirely different war—or entirely different wards—than La Motte depicts in *Backwash*.

While the war was still under way, the literary conventions for works by nurses remained highly uniform, and these conventions were already solidly in place before La Motte had even arrived at the hospital in Belgium. On the published page, patients received their care with profuse gratitude and never a word of complaint. Violetta Thurstan's *Field Hospital and Flying Column*, which was published in April 1915, provides a good example. Thurstan was an English nurse who served early in the war as matron of a hospital in German-occupied Belgium. Of that experience, she writes, "I am sure that no hospital ever had nicer patients than ours were. The French patients, though all severely wounded and prisoners in the hands of the Germans, bore their troubles cheerfully, even gaily."[60]

Interestingly, in 1917 Thurstan published a second work, *A Text Book of War Nursing*, which was quickly recognized as the authoritative text on the subject. In it, she states that nurses "must be able to bear the gigantic waste and pity of it all, the endless killing and maiming and still keep cheerful and well-balanced and always seeing the best side of things."[61] The same rosy

rules applied equally to wartime nurse writers. But whereas other nurses were sentimental and sympathetic, La Motte was scathing and satirical.

Among nurse writers' works, those by La Motte's actual wartime colleagues provide an especially useful perspective. One fellow nurse even mentioned La Motte in her book, *War Letters of an American Woman* (1916). The author, Marie Van Vorst, was an expatriate writer living in France, who volunteered at the American-supported military hospital in Paris. In late 1914, Van Vorst noted in a letter that La Motte was among the nurses "anxious to go to the front." In another letter, the following summer, Van Vorst described La Motte's experience in the Dunkirk bombardment: "She said she was frightened to death, and it was perfectly horrible."[62]

Von Vorst also presents in her book some powerfully evocative descriptions of the military hospital in Paris and its patients. She records, for example, her shock on first entering the ward for men with wounds infected with gas gangrene: "The odour seemed a conglomeration of every foul and evil thing—penetrating, dank; and from then on that terrible odour seemed to penetrate to my very bones." Elsewhere, in lines hauntingly reminiscent of Walt Whitman's description of wounded Civil War soldiers, she describes the arrival of new patients:

> Direct from the trenches the men are carried in . . . a long line of stretchers with their pitiful burdens, the men with their wounds dressed on the field, men who have not had their boots off, or their clothes, for three weeks, some of them with grey, strange faces—such anxious looks, such pallor! And those dreadful dressings that have been on for days.[63]

In her published letters, Van Vorst thus evocatively describes some of the sickening smells and unsettling sights that she and La Motte both encountered in the Paris hospital. Yet, unlike La Motte, Van Vorst remained wholly supportive of the war and eager for America to join the fight.

Three of La Motte's colleagues at the field hospital in Belgium also wrote about their wartime experiences, in works published over a span of nearly thirty years. *My Beloved Poilus*, a volume of wartime letters by Agnes Warner, a trained American nurse, appeared in early 1917. *A Green Tent in Flanders*, the war diary of Maud Mortimer, a volunteer American nurse, was published later that same year. A dozen years later, *The Forbidden Zone*, a modernist war memoir by Mary Borden, the American director and bene-

factor of the field hospital, was released in 1929.[64] And *Journey Down a Blind Alley*, another memoir by Borden, covering both world wars, was published in 1946. These books provide valuable information about the history, structure, and success of the field hospital, where the three women worked alongside La Motte.

Borden, an American heiress and writer who had no formal nursing training, was the founder of the hospital. As she explains in *Journey Down a Blind Alley*, she volunteered early in the war, through the French Red Cross, to care for typhoid patients at an improvised hospital in Dunkirk. There she encountered sick men lying in long rows on dingy beds, but there were no nursing supplies with which to assist them. She describes the scene as "a dim purgatory of gaunt heads, imploring eyes and clutching hands." The experience made her acutely aware of the dire need for properly equipped hospitals, and she soon arranged with the French army to underwrite the cost of equipping a new field hospital, for which she would be in charge of day-to-day management. Her agreement also allowed her to select the hospital's nurses.[65]

Hôpital Chirurgical Mobile No. 1 opened in July 1915, and as its name suggests, it was the French army's first mobile surgical hospital. It had roughly 140 patient beds, a dozen nurses, and a single operating room with three tables. The hospital was situated by the Belgian village of Roesbrugge, midway between Dunkirk and Ypres. There the "mobile" hospital remained throughout La Motte's time as a volunteer because, as La Motte explained in the introduction to *Backwash*, the opposing armies "remained deadlocked, in one position."

La Motte's nursing colleagues provide useful descriptions of the hospital and nearby Roesbrugge. Warner records, "It is a regular field hospital and is composed of a great many portable huts or sheds; some are fitted up as wards, another the operating room, another the pharmacy, another supply room, laundry, nurses' quarters, doctors' quarters, etc. It is a little colony set down in the fields and the streets are wooden sidewalks." She also offers a glimpse inside the nurses' quarters. "I share a small room with two other nurses and there is not much room to spare," she writes. "We have boxes put up on end for tables and wash-stands, and there is only one chair. Some of the nurses have tents, two in each."[66] Regarding the hospital's setting, Mortimer explains, "From the windows [of the linen room], we have a bird's-eye view of the nearest village, with the spotted reptile of continually moving

troops crawling through its single, straggling street." Windows in the operating room, Mortimer notes, offer a view looking out "across to the mud flats of Flanders, here and there dotted with windmills."[67] Borden adds that the hospital was a "pleasant affair of neat huts standing firmly in a green field."[68]

La Motte also described the hospital. At the start of "The Hole in the Hedge," she explains, "The field hospital stood in a field outside the village, surrounded by a thick, high hedge of prickly material. Within, the enclosure was filled by a dozen little wooden huts, painted green, connected with each other by plank walks." In a newspaper interview, La Motte later added, "The hospital was arranged with many separate buildings, so that in going from one ward to another the nurses had to go outdoors: day or night, and in all sorts of weather. The weather mostly was vile, and, despite our stoves, we had difficulty in keeping warm."[69]

The hospital stood roughly ten kilometers behind the firing line, which meant the fighting was highly audible and unnerving. As Warner wrote home,

> The first night I arrived I did not sleep, for the guns roared all night long, and we could see the flashes from the shells quite plainly; the whole sky was aglow. The French and English guns sounded like a continuous roar of thunder; but when the shells from the German guns landed on this side we could feel a distinct shock, and everything in our little shanty rattled.

She also noted that, at the time of her arrival in September 1915, "four English, three American and three French nurses" were working at the hospital; one of whom was surely La Motte. In her next letter, she added, "Some of the nurses were in Dunkirk when it was bombarded, and they said the noise was the most terrifying part of it all."[70] Clearly, for the nurses, not to mention the patients, being so close to the fighting could be quite frightening, and it could also trigger memories of past trauma.

Located so near to the firing line, the hospital served the highest risk patients, and it did so quite impressively. As Mortimer explains, "Only such of the wounded are brought to us as may not without danger be carried farther."[71] Even so, the doctors and nurses at the field hospital were able to save many lives. Warner reports that from July 23, 1915, when the hospital

opened, through January 1, 1916, a total of 750 patients were cared for at the hospital, of which only 66 died.[72] It was a notably low mortality rate for a field hospital at the time, and the rate dropped even lower in the following months. After the statistics for the hospital's entire first year were calculated, Mortimer was gratified to record in her diary, "We have only lost one man in every thirteen and—since, for the most part, only the worst cases are brought to us—the hospital may be proud of its record."[73]

La Motte's work at the hospital were entirely encompassed within that first year, and dozens of patients from the period appear on the pages of *The Backwash of War*. Fascinatingly, some of these same patients also appear in the works of her colleagues. For example, the patient in La Motte's "Heroes," who shot himself through the roof of his mouth in a failed suicide attempt, reappears in Borden's *The Forbidden Zone*. But there is a surprising twist in Borden's narration of his case.

In many ways, the accounts by La Motte and Borden about this patient align. Both women recognize the absurdity of saving the man's life, if he is ultimately going to be court martialed and placed before a firing squad. Likewise, both writers describe how the patient repeatedly tries to pull the postoperative bandages off his head, in an attempt to kill himself. In *Backwash* he is prevented from doing so. In *The Forbidden Zone*, however, he is allowed to succeed. Borden explains that she told the night nurse, "When [he] pulls off his bandage tonight, leave it off." And then Borden records that the night nurse "looked at me a minute hesitating. She was highly trained. Her traditions, her professional conscience, the honor of her calling loomed for a moment before her, then her eyes lighted. 'All right.'"[74]

At the end of La Motte's story, the man is alive, but at the end of Borden's, he is dead. This key difference in the tandem tales invites a weighty question. La Motte's version of the story is clearly told from the perspective of the night nurse, and Borden insists in the preface to *The Forbidden Zone*, "I have not invented anything in this book."[75] Does this mean that La Motte was the highly trained nurse in Borden's account, who helped the doomed man die?

Other patients in *Backwash* also appear in works by La Motte's colleagues. Amazingly, one patient even appears in the works of Warner, Mortimer, Borden, and La Motte. He is the Parisian petty criminal from the much-despised Bataillon d'Afrique. In "A Citation," La Motte describes

how a vainglorious surgeon pointlessly and painfully prolongs this man's life. She writes, "He lay in hospital for several months, suffering greatly, but greatly patient." Similarly, Mortimer notes that the man was "one of the pets of the hospital and the pride of the doctors—not because of any show of health he made . . . but because he was still alive after all they had been allowed to do to him." She further records that after spending four months at the hospital, the man eventually died in January 1916, folded in the arms of a tearful nurse.[76]

Mortimer, Warner, and La Motte describe the events following the patient's death in a strikingly similar way. Mortimer records, "Twenty minutes later the General [arrived with] a Croix de Guerre and a Médaille Militaire in his hand."[77] Warner notes, "Half an hour after he died the General came to decorate him."[78] And La Motte writes, "So he died finally, after a long pull, just twenty minutes before the General arrived with his medals." All three writers capture the tragic irony of the general arriving just a little too late. But Borden's account in *The Forbidden Zone* is radically different, and the general and medals play no part. Instead, Borden shapes a dramatic story of religious salvation. She describes the man as a "vile savage rat from the sewers of Paris" and calls his bed in the hospital ward "a centre of obscenity," where "foul odours, foul words, foul matter [swirl] round him."[79] Yet at the end of her story, a priest succeeds in saving the man's soul, and the patient dies smiling at dawn.

When La Motte's book is compared with those by Warner, Mortimer, and Borden, new angles and complexities appear. Not only did the women help care for the same patients, but they also shared important bonds, forged by the experience. In fact, La Motte dedicated *The Backwash of War* to Borden, "The Little Boss." La Motte had spent half a year trying to obtain a position at the front, and as she writes in the dedication, Borden finally made possible her "experience in the zone of the armies." Likewise, Borden was deeply fond of La Motte. In early September 1915, another American recorded, "Mrs. Borden Turner (the lady she is with) says [Miss La Motte] is the joy of her life."[80]

La Motte and her colleagues even wrote about one another. Borden, for example, frequently appears in *Backwash* as the "Directrice." Even more fascinating, La Motte herself repeatedly appears in Mortimer's *A Green Tent in Flanders*. In a diary entry from January 1916, Mortimer first describes

an American who is a "fully trained and excellent nurse," a "pacifist and neutral to the backbone," and an expert in hospital efficiency. She nicknames the nurse Organization. (La Motte had previously been superintendent of the Tuberculosis Division at the Baltimore Health Department.) Mortimer records that the nurse is "big and breezy." (La Motte was five foot eight.) She adds that the nurse had just returned from "her happy home." (La Motte had been on an extended break at her home in Paris.) Then taking note of Organization's literary pursuit, Mortimer writes, "She is not here now to probe physical weakness but to cut deeper—for the purification of art and sentiment—down to the unquestionable depravity of the human heart." And Mortimer perceptively comments, "Logically given form what a hit the real truth will make."[81]

The following month, Mortimer again wrote about the truth-seeking American nurse:

> It almost looks as though Organization has a grouch; she certainly has a cold. For some days she has lain in her cot with her face to the wall, like Hezekiah, and figs cannot heal her hurt. "How wrong-headed and untrustworthy every one is. Life is so untidy; if only some one would fairly face cleaning it up, might it not easily be done." Baffled she returns to her happy home. Yet perhaps after all she has got what she came for. Her attaché case bulges with documentary evidence of the obliquity of human nature especially as observed under torture in a field hospital.[82]

Organization is rather unmistakably La Motte, as seen through the eyes of a fellow nurse. She is depressed. She is disillusioned. And she is returning to Paris, for another extended break, with an attaché case full of story drafts and notes that she will transform into *The Backwash of War*.

Countless men and women crafted works about World War I, including soldiers, journalists, doctors, nurses, and civilians. They published volumes of poetry, memoirs, novels, story collections, journals, and more. Each of these works, whether written during or after the conflict, reflects a specific perspective, style, and sensibility that can be profitably compared with La Motte's own. Works by other nurses, in particular, complement and contradict La Motte's works in illuminating ways.

Nurse writers present the war from a uniquely female perspective. Nursing was the province of women, and the nurse writers of World War I

occupied a special no man's land. Putting their own lives at risk, they tended to the sick, wounded, and dying, and they chronicled war as witnessed from the ambulance trains and hospital wards.

Ellen N. La Motte was not simply the author of an extraordinary book, who bore brave witness to World War I. She was also an extraordinary woman. At the time she volunteered as a war nurse, she was already in her early forties and extremely accomplished. She was a trained nurse, who had risen to the heights of her profession, authored a nursing textbook, and published over twenty essays in the field of public health. She also was a suffragist, journalist, socialist, lesbian, expatriate, and much more. To understand *The Backwash of War* and her war essays more fully, it is helpful to read them within the context of La Motte's bold life, as sketched in the following biography.

Biography

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Family Background

Ellen Newbold La Motte hailed from a poor branch of the socially prominent duPont family, which gained stature in the nineteenth century as a leading manufacturer of gunpowder.[1] Born in 1873 in Louisville, Kentucky, of French Huguenot descent, La Motte was the first child of Ferdinand and Ellen (Newbold) La Motte. She was raised in Louisville, along with her sister, Mary Augusta, and brother, Ferdinand Jr. But when her father's business failed in 1890, she went to Wilmington, Delaware, to live in the home of a second cousin, the wealthy industrialist Alfred I. duPont, who would thereafter play a pivotal role in her life.[2]

La Motte remained in her cousin's home as she matured into a young woman. In summer 1898, at the age of twenty-four, she reflected, "I am unmarried, and although my father and mother are living I have not lived with them during the last seven or eight years, but have made my home during this time with my cousins, Mr. and Mrs. Alfred I. duPont of Wilmington, and Mr. duPont has stood practically in the position of my guardian."[3]

During these same years, Alfred I. duPont, a leading innovator in the field of munitions, significantly improved the production of smokeless powder for small arms and brown powder for artillery. Thanks to his efforts, the DuPont Company became America's first manufacturer of smokeless powder. Even more notably, DuPont became the United States' primary manufacturer of brown powder during the Spanish American War in 1898.[4]

The duPonts figured prominently in Wilmington's high society, and as a member of the extended family, La Motte belonged to the "fashionable set." By the time she was in her early twenties, her attendance at dances, luncheons, and weddings was regularly mentioned in local newspaper society

columns. However, La Motte aspired to something other than playing the part of a society lady and decided to study nursing. It was an unconventional choice for a woman from her background. A far more common path would have been to "marry well" and settle into a domestic role. Very likely, though, La Motte already knew that marriage did not lie in her future.

Nursing and Early Writing

In summer 1898, La Motte applied to Johns Hopkins' highly regarded Training School for Nurses. In her letter of application, she wrote,

> I will be twenty five years old in November; my height is five feet eight inches, and I weigh a hundred and forty five pounds.
>
> I am, and always have been, strong and vigorous, and . . . my health, with the exception of all the childish diseases, and one attack of diphtheria eighteen months ago, has always been excellent. . . .
>
> My education was obtained at the hands of a series of governesses, at one or two private schools, and finally, at [a] boarding school [in] Philadelphia, and consists of the usual amount of history, literature, French, mathematics, etc., generally derived form such sources.
>
> I have never had any occupation at all.

To complete her application, she submitted letters from two doctors attesting to her overall good health and one from the bishop of Delaware, who stated that "by reason of her character and standing and education," she was "unusually well qualified to serve as a nurse."[5]

Last, she sat for an interview at Johns Hopkins and was judged to be "a most attractive woman—very handsome & ladylike." When the interviewer asked why she was interested in nursing, La Motte explained that "she wanted to make some thing out of her life and was ready & anxious to do any amount of hard work to accomplish it." After the interview, La Motte was accepted for admission in fall 1898.[6]

Her plans to train as a nurse, however, met with significant opposition from her family. In late September 1898, La Motte wrote to the director of the nursing school to explain the situation:

> To be quite frank, my family objects bitterly to my going to the hospital, and have demanded of me that I wait six months before going. . . .

> If I go before that time, it will mean, I fear, one utter and absolute break in all my relations with my people. . . . If you will allow me to wait . . . while I may not be able to bring my family to my way of thinking, I will at least be able to avoid this rupture which, as you may imagine, I most earnestly hope to do.

The school allowed La Motte the postponement, and in spring 1899, she finally entered the Johns Hopkins Hospital Training School for Nurses.[7]

Reflecting her social standing in Wilmington, her decision to study nursing merited mention in the society columns of local newspapers. The *Evening Journal* reported, "Miss Ellen La Motte, a well-known Wilmington society girl, will enter Johns Hopkins University at Baltimore to become a trained nurse."[8] And with far more of a flourish, the *Morning News* announced, "One of our belles and favorites in Vanity Fair has said good-bye to tulle and dancing slippers this winter and adopted the apron and cap of the hospital nurse. Miss Ellen La Motte . . . will take a three years' course in the science of nursing."[9]

As a nurse in training, La Motte distinguished herself, and after she graduated, she was appointed as a supervising nurse at Johns Hopkins Hospital for 1902–1903.[10] During her years of training, La Motte also discovered a passion for researching, and writing about, public health. While she was still a student, she published her first article, "Early Struggles with Contagion," in the *American Journal of Nursing*. In it she traces the discovery of the smallpox vaccine, and at the essay's end, she optimistically observes that vaccinations, along with better sanitation and hygiene, are "bringing us within sight of the day when those diseases which for centuries have held humanity in subjection shall themselves be brought into subjection and under control."[11]

Following her year as a supervising nurse at Johns Hopkins, La Motte spent two years nursing in various capacities in Europe and America and published several more essays, in which she examined assorted aspects of European medical care. In these essays—"Piqures—The Italian Method of Giving Medicine," "A Modern Italian Hospital," "Private Nursing in Italy," and "Hôpital Général, Rheims"—La Motte assesses medical practices, hospital facilities, and nursing care abroad with the eye of a trained nurse. She also displays flashes of her barbed sense of humor. Of the Italian hospital,

she comments, "The whole hospital, in every detail, seemed to be equipped with every labor-saving device that could be conceived of." Then she archly adds, "The day will soon come when the nursing standards will be on a par with the beautiful mechanical equipment."[12]

In July 1905, La Motte returned to Baltimore, where she began working as a tuberculosis field nurse for the Instructive Visiting Nurse Association. In this capacity, she visited homes of tubercular patients and taught them and their family members how to prevent the spread of the disease. It was an era in which the "white plague" remained a major threat to public health. (In fact, Alfred I. duPont's father had succumbed to tuberculosis in 1877, orphaning Alfred and his four siblings, whose mother had died a month earlier.)[13] La Motte was initially optimistic about the changes she could effect. She became less certain over time, however, as her interactions with patients convinced her that poverty and ignorance posed stubborn barriers to the success of her efforts.

Mirroring her nursing work, tuberculosis became the central focus of her writing. Her first essay on the topic was "Tuberculosis Work of the Instructive Visiting Nurse Association of Baltimore," published in late 1905. In its pages, La Motte demonstrates a clear-eyed and dispassionate understanding of the challenges involved in stopping the spread of infection. "Tuberculosis is a disease that is bred and spread in unsanitary, overcrowded, and poverty-stricken households," she explains. "Patients of this class who have got tuberculosis cannot afford to get well or cannot afford to stay so. . . . For the most part the individual is doomed. The benefits of this work are not for him, but for the community."[14]

Over time, La Motte earned a reputation as an expert in the field of tuberculosis and public health. In addition to working as a field nurse, she regularly lectured and published, and she also played an active role in local, statewide, national, and even international nursing and public health communities. In the numerous essays she wrote during her years as a field nurse, she expressed her views on the broad issue of tubercular care and warned about specific dangers, such as sending consumptive patients to the countryside or having them work as seasonal strawberry pickers.[15]

Having grown convinced, through her work as a field nurse, that the poor could not be relied on to prevent the spread of the disease, La Motte boldly advocated for the compulsory segregation of patients with

advanced-stage tuberculosis. In 1909 she explained that "by reason of poverty, ignorance, and environment," a class of people was "crushed into a position" in which they could not apply the safety measures that the public health community was attempting to teach them. Consequently, she declared: "The patient at large is dangerous."[16] It was a radical position that put La Motte at odds with more traditional practitioners in her field. As a scholar of nursing history would later note, "She was the first to grasp the importance of segregating advanced cases of tuberculosis—and to advocate this measure at international conferences."[17]

La Motte also briefly experimented with humor writing during her years as a field nurse. Her work visiting dying patients in dilapidated houses would seem an unlikely subject for laughs, but La Motte drew on her experiences to write a series of short sketches, "Humor of the Districts." In these pieces she invites her readers to chuckle at things her patients and their family members say and do. The mother of a typhoid patient, for example, is told that her son has a temperature of 104 degrees. "Oh, that's nothing!" The mother cheerfully replies. "When Johnny was sick last winter his temperature was 135°." In an introduction to the sketches, La Motte explained that finding humor in scenes of hardship helped her cope with her grim work. "These little incidents," she writes, "have done much to lessen the tension of difficult days and to brighten those which seemed rather too full of the sufferings of these 'district people.'"[18] Similarly, she would employ dark humor years later to write about her difficult days too full of the suffering of wounded soldiers.

After working for several years as a field nurse, La Motte received two promotions in quick succession. In March 1909, she was appointed by Baltimore's Board of Health as one of two nurses in charge of overseeing the fumigation of buildings after the death or removal of tubercular patients. Less than a year later, she received an even more noteworthy promotion when she was appointed director of the newly created Tuberculosis Division of the Baltimore Health Department, which replaced the Instructive Visiting Nurse Association in caring for the city's tubercular patients. In this new role, La Motte was in charge of fourteen nurses caring for some 1,700 patients.[19] She was the first woman to hold an executive position in the Health Department, and news of her appointment eventually appeared in newspapers around the country.[20]

In the year before La Motte took charge, 1,250 Baltimore residents had died of tuberculosis, and she was determined to lower the annual number of deaths.[21] She was addressing an epidemic and was doing so with remarkable skill and boldness. As part of her effort, she even dared strike at the trickiest of topics: kissing. The *Baltimore Sun* reported, "The contact of lip and lip, says Miss La Motte, affords an ideal opportunity for the voyaging of pathogenic organisms. . . . Therefore, it is thoughtless and often cruel to kiss, and sometimes suicidal to be kissed."[22]

La Motte quickly proved to be highly effective in her new role. After she published her first annual report as director, the *American Journal of Nursing* wrote that she was "to be congratulated on an excellent report of a splendid year's work." The journal added, "Nurses all over the country will appreciate its helpfulness if they are fortunate enough to obtain a copy. . . . [It is] a compendium of scientific data as well as a unique report of this special branch of nursing." And in La Motte's second year as director, the nurses under her supervision cared for a record three thousand tubercular patients, thanks to her successful initiative to identify and treat additional cases in the community.[23]

In these years, La Motte also continued to present and publish essays about tuberculosis and related public health topics. From 1910 to 1912, these included "The Neglected Tuberculosis Child," "The Present Attitude of the Tuberculosis Nurse towards Her Work," "Milk and Eggs for Consumptives," "The Nurse as a Social Worker," "Municipal Care of Tuberculosis," and "The Value of Record Keeping."[24] She also helped found the National Organization for Public Health Nursing, of which she was a director.[25]

La Motte had become a leading practitioner in her field, and in autumn 1911, she was recruited to direct the well-established Instructive District Nursing Association in Boston. In letters solicited by that organization's president, more than half a dozen of La Motte's colleagues and friends attested to her skills and strengths. Read together, these letters paint a portrait of an extremely capable woman. The head of Baltimore's Health Department wrote, "Miss La Motte possesses . . . ability, tact, and enthusiastic devotion [in a greater degree] than any other woman that has come under my observation during my public life."[26] Another respondent stated, "I consider her one of the ablest women in the nursing profession." Others called La Motte

an "extremely intellectual woman" and "an excellent organizer," noting that she had "broad insight into social conditions" and "a clear and optimistic vision concerning social problems."[27]

La Motte was offered the position in Boston but politely declined. As she explained, "This work, of which I am at present in charge, is in too unsettled a state for me to leave it." When pressed again to consider the Boston position, La Motte acknowledged in a second letter, "The work appeals to me strongly, [but] I cannot honestly consider leaving." She added, "I'm the only woman that has ever had charge of a city department here in Baltimore."[28]

Role in the Suffrage Movement

La Motte was in fact dedicated to expanding the role of women in civic life in Baltimore and beyond, and she had already come to play a notably visible role in the city's suffrage movement. In January 1910, the same month she took charge of the Tuberculosis Division, La Motte was actively campaigning for an amendment to Baltimore's city charter that would allow women equal suffrage rights with men. She participated in several "parlor talks," arranged by the city's Equal Suffrage League, in which the proposed legislation was discussed in the homes of local women, and she also gave a speech to the Just Government League, another local suffrage organization.[29] The following month, February 1910, she was chosen as one of ten speakers to address Maryland's Committee on Elections, and in her allotted time, she focused on the topic of "Tuberculosis and Improved Sanitation."[30]

For La Motte, protecting public health and advocating for women's suffrage were closely interlinked endeavors. Women voters, she believed, would promote changes that would help prevent the spread of tuberculosis and other diseases. They also would address other social ills. For example, La Motte contended that Baltimore's courts routinely favored men, even sexual predators. As she explained in a talk in October 1910, "We want to be able to effect certain reforms, and we are prevented from doing so from lack of political power. It requires the ballot to accomplish the things we wish."[31]

La Motte's fellow suffragists put forth other compelling arguments for granting women the vote. In January 1910, at an event sponsored by the

Just Government League that La Motte attended, a speaker reasoned, "Some of our opponents say because we cannot fight we should not vote. There is a great fight being waged in this city at present. It is a bitter war against tuberculosis, [and there is] not a man in the ranks." Then the speaker made another notable point: "Suppose our country did go to war, trained nurses—women—would go to the front. They would be exposed to the same danger as the man behind the cannon. Yet they are not allowed to vote." Little could La Motte have known, as she spent that meeting busily enrolling new league members and soliciting signatures for the equal suffrage bill, how relevant those words about war nurses would be to her life.[32]

Whatever the merits of the suffragists' arguments, there were those in Baltimore who adamantly opposed having women vote, and before long, La Motte had earned a reputation as "a rabid suffragist." It was a disparaging label but accurately reflected her deep commitment to the cause. She contributed to the *New Voter* and continued to lecture to various audiences, including a group at the Salvation Army's headquarters, the Men's Guild of the Garrett Park Methodist Episcopal Church, and factory workers from the local chapter of the Hair Spinners Union.[33]

As La Motte grew ever more ardently committed to the suffrage cause, her politics became ever more pronouncedly radical. When she addressed a meeting of socialists in November 1911, the *Baltimore Sun* reported, "Miss La Motte spoke on the conditions of the women who earn their living in factories. Her address was along socialistic lines and she urged the support of the men for woman's suffrage."[34] Privately, though, La Motte had already "gone far beyond" socialism. As she confided to a close friend in a letter written in December 1911, "Outwardly I'm a good Socialist, and speak at meetings and all that, but inwardly I'm a free Anarchist—free—free."[35]

Relationships and Heartbreak

In that same letter, written in December 1911, thirty-eight-year-old La Motte discussed her recent heartbreak. She had fallen deeply in love with a woman named Louise and had been willing to sacrifice a great deal for them to be together. As La Motte confided to her friend, "I told her I was ready to go with her—anywhere—to give up my work and all here, and together we could find work and freedom beyond the reach of any one."[36]

Just a few months earlier, La Motte had been unwilling to leave Baltimore for Boston. Now she was fully prepared to resign her position to be with Louise. She further explained, "I made it quite plain that I could stop my work here any time with a clear mind, feeling that I had made my contribution to society—had paid my shot." Nonetheless, Louise—whom La Motte described as a daughter "of the idle rich"—was unwilling to go forward with their relationship. She was too afraid of the social repercussions and the ramifications for her family. As La Motte recounted, "She admitted that I was the best friend she had ever had in her life, and that she loved me better than any one, but she could not give up social position and family pride—that it would mean so much to her family, that her sisters could not marry men of 'position' if these men knew of her, etc."[37]

Ultimately, Louise returned to New York, as La Motte wrote, "on a terrible pinnacle of virtue, not wishing to bring disgrace and unhappiness on her family, or risk their ever hearing of the thing which might have troubled them."[38] Lesbianism was not countenanced in mainstream society, and as La Motte's letters make clear, the reputation of Louise's family would have been irrevocably damaged if the women's relationship had come into public view. La Motte, the "free anarchist," was willing to risk social opprobrium, but Louise was not.

For want of solid evidence, it is harder to trace La Motte's earlier relationships, but she apparently was romantically involved, at some point during her years in Baltimore, with her colleague Mary Lent, quite likely overlapping with a long trip they took together to England in summer 1906. One revealing hint of their intimacy survives in a letter La Motte wrote from Paris in 1913 to the same close friend to whom she had confided about Louise. In the letter, La Motte acknowledged, "Yes, I think you are right about Mary. This separation has brought about a better understanding and I find that my love for her for all these years is very real."[39]

What is clear is that La Motte and Lent remained extremely close for more than a decade, in many realms of their lives. Lent was the superintendent of the Instructive Visiting Nurse Association, for which La Motte was a field nurse, and they both lived in staff housing at the association's headquarters. They shared progressive views on nursing, and in 1909 they coauthored an essay, "The Present Status of Tuberculosis Work among the Poor."[40] Both were also ardent suffragists, and their names often appeared

together in press coverage of their suffrage work. An article from 1911, for example, begins, "Misses Ellen N. La Motte and Mary E. Lent, of the Just Government League, were the principal speakers last night."[41]

The women were also present at critical points in each other's lives. When Lent underwent surgery in 1913, La Motte was permitted to remain in the operating room with one of Lent's family members. Likewise, in 1912 Lent cared for La Motte when she was operated on for appendicitis. As the *Baltimore Sun* reported, "Miss Mary E. Lent, a co-worker, accompanied Miss La Motte to the hospital, and has been her almost constant attendant."[42] Equally notable, Lent managed La Motte's financial affairs in America during the early years of World War I, when La Motte was nursing in France and Belgium. Lent even played a key role in placing La Motte's war essays for publication.

In fall 1911, a mutual acquaintance observed that La Motte and Lent were "devoted friends." In December 1911, however, it was not Lent who occupied La Motte's thoughts. Instead it was Louise, who had fled home to New York to avoid public disgrace. "My heart is heavy," La Motte wrote, "when I think of her."[43]

New Experiments in Suffragism and Journalism

Perhaps to take her mind off Louise, La Motte dedicated ever more time to social reform causes in the early months of 1912. In addition to her full-time job, she was working "after 4 p.m. and on Sundays and in the evenings" trying to advance two suffrage bills, as well as a bill "limiting the hours of working women to ten a day," a child labor bill, a compulsory education bill, and an anti-saloon bill. But as she facetiously noted in a letter, "the chivalrous Southern gentlemen" in control of Maryland's legislature were blocking these social reforms.[44]

Above all La Motte remained passionately committed to winning the vote for women, and she came to play an increasingly public role in the local, national, and even international suffrage movement. In February 1912, she was among a delegation of five women that appeared before Maryland's Senate Committee on Elections to promote a bill establishing the right of tax-paying women to vote in Baltimore's municipal elections. La Motte called it "suffrage with the fangs drawn, since it admits taxpaying women only." But the bill was intended as an "entering wedge." In an uncomfort-

able concession to what La Motte called "race prejudice here," the bill was shaped to exclude the "colored vote." Even so, La Motte accurately predicted it would be defeated.[45]

In June 1912, La Motte played an even more public role in the suffrage movement, as chief marshal of a major suffrage parade, which took place during the Democratic presidential convention in Baltimore. A thousand suffragists from the United States and other countries participated, and some fifteen thousand onlookers lined their route. La Motte marched in the place of honor, at the front of the large pageant, alongside Anna Howard Shaw, the president of the National American Suffrage Association. But it was also a potentially dangerous position, if the onlookers proved hostile. As Mississippi's *Jackson Daily News* had reported in advance, "Miss Ellen La Motte will march, followed by a detachment of some forty police."[46]

Later that summer, La Motte's activities were temporarily halted, when she was stricken with appendicitis and underwent emergency surgery; but following a period of convalescence, she returned to the fight.[47] In the first half of 1913, she became a contributing editor of the *Maryland Suffrage News*, took part in an Equal Suffrage pageant held in Baltimore, and signed up to join a seventeen-day long suffrage march from New York City to Washington.[48] She was dedicated to promoting the suffrage cause, but she was also growing increasingly frustrated that in America the fight for the vote was not as militant as in England.

In June 1913 La Motte took an open-ended leave of absence from her job in Baltimore and made plans to join the suffrage movement in England. Reflecting both her prominence as a public figure and the boldness of her decision, she once again made national headlines. The *Houston Post* announced, "Nurse to Join Militants. Hospital Chief Leaves Baltimore for Thick of Fray," and the *Oakland Tribune* trumpeted, "Nurse Will Fight with Suffragettes."[49]

More locally, the *Baltimore Sun* ran a lengthy profile of La Motte, which began, "Baltimore is about to lose, temporarily at least, one of its most distinguished citizens." The paper reported that La Motte planned to watch England's militant suffragettes and possibly "strike a blow in their revolution," and La Motte was quoted as stating, "You cannot but admire these women who have shaken off the conventionalities which have bound them down for years."[50]

La Motte's decision went against the way of thinking of her beloved cousin Alfred I. duPont. As she told the *Baltimore Sun*, "I have a cousin, a man, who heartily disapproves of suffragetting and such things." But she emphasized that duPont had not tried to deter her. He said, "Not a word of objection. Not an 'Ellen, you are insane.'" Instead, he provided La Motte his financial support, while also demonstrating the wry sense of humor they shared. As La Motte explained, "He read in the newspapers of my determination to go to London, and directly after I received by post from him a nice, fat check. On it was written these simple words, 'For Bail.'"[51]

La Motte also used her interview with the *Baltimore Sun* to declare herself an anarchist. The newspaper noted, "Miss La Motte [says] that while once she was a Socialist she has now stepped over the line and has become an anarchist." And later that June, when La Motte set sail for England, another article reported that her friends had jokingly draped her stateroom "with the anarchistic colors, red and black" and planted in it an array of fake bombs and other explosives.[52]

The trip to England also afforded La Motte the opportunity to experiment with journalism. Prior to leaving Baltimore, she had arranged with the *Baltimore Sun* to write a series of articles about the British suffragettes, as a special correspondent. Preceding the publication of the first of these articles, the paper informed its readers, "Whether *your* personal interest is for or against the suffragette cause, the description of things as this Baltimore woman analyzes them will be of exceptional value."[53]

La Motte's initial article, "While Britain Prays, Her Militants Sing Their Hymns of War," appeared in late July, within a month of her arrival in London, and filled an entire newspaper page. In it La Motte gives a gripping account of a speech delivered by the prominent suffragette Sylvia Pankhurst, which was filled with "furious denunciations of the British government." After the speech, as La Motte recounts, the suffragettes marched out of the lecture hall into a sea of three hundred policemen. A fight broke out, and amid the "wild turmoil," Pankhurst was caught by the head and dragged "on her knees through the street."[54]

Back in Baltimore, the article provoked sharp controversy. In a lengthy letter to the *Baltimore Sun*, one female reader charged, "The whole article is a sneer at the British Government," and the reader suggested that La

Motte deserved a "public spanking."[55] But the prominent suffragette Mary Richardson, who would be arrested nine times for her militant tactics (which included arson, bombing a railway station, and slashing a painting in London's National Gallery), wrote to the newspaper from England to attest, "Miss La Motte's accounts are vivid but honest." In fact, it was Richardson who had invited La Motte to the speech and had afterward locked arms with her, when they faced the massed policemen.[56]

La Motte continued to detail her experiences in London among the suffragettes in her subsequent articles for the *Baltimore Sun*. She had tea with a woman recently released from prison, who was frail from a hunger strike. She gave testimony in court about police brutality and sold a suppressed suffragette newspaper on the streets of London. Filled with vehemence and a fair amount of venom, La Motte's series of six lengthy articles about England's suffrage movement, published during the summer and early fall of 1913, well demonstrate her commitment to the suffrage cause.[57] As she noted in one article, she had "been through four fights and one riot (and not always in the capacity of an innocent bystander)."[58]

The essays also preview the slashing sense of humor that would be on fuller display in *The Backwash of War*. For example, in an article titled "Ellen La Motte Insulted on Crowded London Street," she describes a "swaggering soldier" who knocks down her poster advertising the *Suffragette* newspaper. La Motte acidly notes that he does not object to militancy when it involves wearing a uniform and being "paid for the taking of human life." Yet he objects to the "militancy of a guerrilla type, practiced by women" simply seeking equality.[59]

Paris and *The Tuberculosis Nurse*

In September 1913, La Motte moved from London to Paris, and with the continued financial support of her devoted cousin, she began to write a textbook in her area of specialization, *The Tuberculosis Nurse: Her Function and Her Qualifications*. As she appreciatively wrote duPont years later,

> I shall never forget that it is owing to you entirely that I was able to give up my work in Baltimore and to have the leisure to undertake the work that I had always wanted to do, that is, write. Without your help . . . I

> should have just had to go on doing work which finally grew to be dull and mechanical, and could never have afforded to live while I tried to make myself known as a writer.[60]

DuPont had quite literally afforded La Motte the freedom to leave her nursing and administrative work behind and to reinvent herself as a writer, first in London and then in Paris.

Once she was settled in a boarding house in Paris, La Motte was soon drawn into the social circle of American expatriates centered on the avant-garde writer Gertrude Stein. Years earlier, Stein had attended the medical school at Johns Hopkins, while La Motte was attending its nursing school. But Stein had left before completing her degree and eventually had moved to Paris. At the time of La Motte's arrival, Stein was living with her life partner, Alice B. Toklas; collecting modernist art; hosting a famous salon attended by prominent authors and artists; and increasingly drawing fame as a leading experimental writer. Stein quickly came to play an important role in La Motte's life, both as a friend and a significant literary influence. At the end of October, less than two months after she arrived in Paris, La Motte recorded in a letter, "Gertrude Stein has had me to lunch, and dinner and tea, and has given me her books, two of them." Other American expatriates also became new friends. In the same letter, La Motte reported that she had attended a party hosted by Stein's brother Michael, who had the "biggest collection of Matisse in Paris." She had also enjoyed an intimate dinner and theater party hosted by Claribel Cone, a Johns Hopkins–trained doctor and avid art collector, at which Henri Matisse was actually a guest.[61]

At the same time, La Motte remained involved with the British suffragettes. She was in touch with Christabel Pankhurst (one of Sylvia Pankhurst's sisters), who was exiled in Paris. Also, the suffragette Mary Richardson stayed with La Motte for a week in early October, shortly after being released from prison, where she had been on a hunger strike.[62] Then in late December, La Motte returned to London to spend a few days with Richardson and participated in a suffragette parade on Christmas Eve.[63]

In addition to mingling with American expatriates and aiding British suffragettes, La Motte seems to have met at least one French luminary scientist. A visiting doctor from Johns Hopkins recorded in his diary that in February 1914, he and La Motte attempted to pay a visit to Madame Curie,

the two-time recipient of a Nobel Prize. Later that same month, La Motte traveled to Germany, to spend time with her close, longtime friend Amy Wesselhoeft von Erdberg, a married American woman who lived near Berlin.[64]

Although La Motte was pleased to have quickly established "a good circle of friends" in Paris, she struggled to limit her socializing and remain focused on her writing. As she confessed to Wesselhoeft, "They take up more of my time, and energy and nervous force than I want to give. From being a perfectly lonely soul, I am swamped with invitations, which I can not resist nor refuse. But it keeps me a bit off my writing, and after all, that is the main thing."[65]

La Motte was hard at work on *The Tuberculosis Nurse*. In it she crafted a practical guide for nurses and others fighting the disease and again made the case for forcibly segregating highly infectious poor patients, for the good of the larger community. At the same time, she expressed her concern for the "extreme distress" of the poor. In her words, they were "habitually overworked, underpaid, and subject to all the deteriorating influences of [an] unsanitary and vicious environment." Reflecting her leftist leanings, she further argued, "Our present unjust economic system . . . produces an excess of luxury and frivolity on the one hand, and on the other an army of people who must forego the barest necessities of life. One class is maintained at the expense of the other."[66] The statement is particularly interesting given that La Motte had come of age in the wealthy duPont household. Moreover, she was being supported, while writing the book, by Alfred I. duPont, who liked to spend his leisure time touring the Atlantic seaboard on his private yacht.

The Tuberculosis Nurse would be well received when it appeared in early 1915. An expert in the nursing field would write, "The book impresses myself and my associates as being an excellent,—it is fair to say a masterly—piece of work."[67] In the *American Journal of Nursing*, another nurse would note, "No point is omitted that is necessary to the successful campaign against this terrible scourge of mankind." She would admiringly add, "The reader gets the idea that the energy and perseverance that speak from every page of the book are very real qualities in its author."[68]

Yet, when La Motte completed the manuscript in spring 1914, she was not satisfied with it. She felt it did not express her true voice as a writer. In

April 1914 she recorded, "My book is done. . . . Now that it is over, I feel terribly depressed—it seems so inadequate and worthless and badly written and badly expressed. . . . I have done it so grudgingly, and it has been such mechanical, uphill work—a duty."[69]

With the draft of *The Tuberculosis Nurse* completed and summer approaching, La Motte looked forward to returning to England and reengaging with the suffragette movement there. She also looked forward to starting a new writing project that would more adequately express her true self. "I shall begin on the sort of work that I want to do," she explained, "the sort of writing that I feel perhaps I can make good at—at any rate I am eager to try, and shall feel some spontaneity in writing of that sort."[70]

During her time in Paris, she had polished her schoolgirl French and achieved her goal of writing a book. But she would remain ambivalent about *The Tuberculosis Nurse*. After its publication, she would declare, "It is a nice book, but somehow it does not seem me. Of course, I did all that work, but I did it stimulated from without, as it were. It is not really me."[71]

The Summer of 1914

In May 1914, La Motte returned to England. Once there, though, she seems to have struggled with depression as she tried to decide what to do next. She did not want to return to public health work. And she had come to feel that the British suffragettes' fight was not her fight, although she remained dedicated to the cause and appalled by what she described as the ever more "drastic repressive measures" used against her militant friends. She also felt a degree of financial pressure. As she wrote in a letter earlier that spring, "I have so little money and must consider it so carefully."[72] Her stipend from duPont covered her modest living expenses but not much more.

After sending off the final version of *The Tuberculosis Nurse* in early June, La Motte felt dangerously unmoored. "I feel lost," she confided to Wesselhoeft, her old friend in Germany. "I feel singularly adrift. Singularly useless, and unattached, and with a curious sense of having finished—finished—finished. I don't know how much of that is the reaction, and the result of being alone, but I feel as if it were all over, as if I had paid my shot, wiped the slate clean, and there was nothing left for me." Even more troublingly, she wrote, "I hope you can understand the state of mind I'm in—the almost desperate state of mind, when nothing seems to

matter, when I have wiped the slate clean and am through. All the things that I wanted to write, when I was tied down and couldn't, seem to me now not worth writing, and I have no desire left."[73]

Nonetheless, within the following two weeks, La Motte completed a preliminary draft of a new work. She sent it to Wesselhoeft, with a request: "Read this . . . and tell me whether there is any thing in it. It is a very rough sketch, and could be filled in and qualified, but do you think there is any thing to it—to that sort of style, and to the idea?"[74] The manuscript is now lost, but in early summer 1914, La Motte was clearly experimenting with a new writing style, which was apparently quite different from the staid style of *The Tuberculosis Nurse*.

In the latter half of June, La Motte also enjoyed "a ripping week in Paris" with Alfred I. duPont. Soon afterward she wrote, "Paris from the standpoint of a millionaire is a totally different place from Paris from the [poor] Latin Quarter. I had two baths a day, and was dressed every night for dinner in [my] low necked evening gown, and presented a sort of washed, dressed and foreign appearance which was far from natural." But once she returned to London, La Motte remained uncertain of her long-term plans. She considered making Paris her home for the next few years, but duPont wanted her to return to America, "cruise around on [his] yacht a bit, and then set [herself] up in New York for the winter." In a letter dated June 24, 1914, La Motte admitted, "My plans are utterly vague, and conditional upon so many things."[75] One thing that she did not factor into her plans, though, was the start of a world war.

On June 28, four days after La Motte wrote her letter, Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria was assassinated in Sarajevo. His death would spark World War I and, thereby, radically change La Motte's plans for the coming winter and beyond, by providing a new focus for her energies, both as a nurse and as a writer. The conflict was still brewing, however, when La Motte finally decided to return to the United States, having spent more than a year abroad. Her ship departed from London on August 1. Within the following days, Germany declared war on France and invaded Belgium. While La Motte was at sea, both literally and figuratively, World War I began.

War Nursing in Paris

La Motte arrived in New York on August 10 and was extremely disappointed, as the *Baltimore Sun* reported, to realize that she had "so narrowly missed her chance to go to the front as a nurse of the wounded." Although she was in America and far from the fray, she was eager to place her services where they were needed, and in mid-October a chance to volunteer presented itself. She received word of a nursing opportunity at an American-sponsored military hospital in Paris. As the *Baltimore Sun* explained, "She is well known among the nurses and physicians of the hospital, and when her desire to take up the work became known to them, the cablegram followed."[76] In late October, La Motte departed from New York, aboard the French ship *La Touraine*, and in early November, she arrived in Paris, where she began working at the military hospital, called the American Ambulance at Neuilly, as one of the first American volunteer nurses.[77]

La Motte would later describe the mismanagement of the hospital quite sharply in an essay titled "An American Nurse in Paris," which appeared in the progressive journal *Survey* in July 1915.[78] She found the hospital oversupplied, overstaffed, and underutilized, and she was frustrated that her nursing skills were not put to better use. Despite the hospital's flaws, it provided La Motte with an introduction to war nursing. On her first morning there, she saw wounded soldiers for the first time. (She helped serve them breakfast and passed out cigarettes, which the patients smoked "with keen enjoyment.") Later that day, she witnessed the arrival of grievously injured soldiers from the front. Their wounds, she noted, were all terribly infected because of the several days they had spent in transit.

After just a few weeks, La Motte left the hospital, determined to find a volunteer position where her nursing skills would be better utilized. But it proved surprisingly difficult. In mid-March 1915, she recorded, "I have now spent four months being told that as a neutral [American] I am not eligible for any thing! Yet there is great and appalling need, and to my trained eye and trained senses, the thing is monstrous." She calculated that she had already made "between twenty five and thirty attempts to get work—real work." At the end of April, she was still a frustrated spectator. "I find myself very restless, just on the edge of these awful events, yet unable to do any part towards caring for the wounded, by reason of my so-called neutral

nationality!" Yet, she expected to be called soon to the front, through du-Pont's influence, or else to "join a big English unit and go out to Serbia," which was in the grip of a terrible typhus epidemic. In the end, she followed neither of these routes. Instead, she was offered a position at a newly established French field hospital in Belgium, which was scheduled to open in July. (That same month, the *Baltimore Sun* would inaccurately report that La Motte "went with a unit of nurses and surgeons into plague-stricken Serbia" and was "now giving her services to the famine and fever stricken Serbians.")[79]

La Motte's long months in Paris spent searching for a position, though frustrating, gave her time to reflect on the war and the way in which it was being represented to readers. As she soon realized, the French government was feeding its citizenry a diet of distorted information, and she would later recall that it was hard to discern the truth in "Paris with its censored press, suppressed speech, and general military rule." Likewise, she guessed that Germany was practicing its own censorship and spreading its own propaganda. In March 1915 she wrote to Wesselhoeft, her American friend in Germany, and requested, "Send me a lot of postcards, depicting your views of the situation. . . . I want a dollar[']s worth, of the rankest caricatures."[80] In another letter, nearly a year later, La Motte clarified the evolution of her outlook on the war.

> I have a darned logical head, & a profound respect for facts. And my residence here has taught me many things, & the underside of them at that! . . . I started out being very prejudiced & partisan, I fed myself from . . . those pellucid wells of truth, the newspapers. Then I got to perceiving some quaint things. The same action was sometimes totally vile & sometimes totally sublime according to who did it! This, think I, is hard to reconcile with reason & commonsense.[81]

Long before she had even arrived at the field hospital in Belgium, La Motte had discovered the hypocrisy of war propaganda and had disavowed her own "prejudiced & partisan" view of the conflict. Nevertheless, she remained eager to work as a war nurse and place her "valuable services where they were needed."[82]

Relationship with Emily Crane Chadbourne

During the months La Motte spent in Paris, something quite important also transpired in her personal life. She began a lasting relationship with Emily Crane Chadbourne, an American heiress and art collector, whose father had founded the Crane Company, a very successful diversified manufacturer based in Chicago.

Chadbourne was an attractive and highly cultured woman, who had left America years earlier, following a failed marriage. In 1896 she had married a lawyer from New York named Thomas Chadbourne, but the marriage was not a success. As a niece of hers would tactfully note, "She was certainly unprepared for matrimony and probably was no good at wifely duties." The couple evidently was a complete mismatch in other ways as well. "From the first it was a tragedy of incompatibility," Thomas Chadbourne would concede decades later. The couple separated in 1899 and, at her insistence, finally divorced seven years later. Soon thereafter, he married the ex-wife of a Chicago dentist, with whom he had been having a long-term affair. (A contemporary headline read, "One Marriage as the Result of Two Divorces.") Meanwhile, Emily Crane Chadbourne moved to Europe because "she felt herself so disgraced."[83]

By the time she and La Motte became a couple, Chadbourne had already been living abroad for nearly a decade, dividing her time between apartments in England and Paris and avidly studying and collecting art. She was an early enthusiast of the French avant-garde and eventually owned dozens of works by Gauguin, Matisse, Dali, and other modernist artists. She also amassed a vast collection of other types of artwork, ranging from Persian and European textiles to early American watercolors and Japanese woodblock prints. She did not desire art simply for her own pleasure. She lent her works to exhibitions, including the landmark "Manet and the Post-Impressionists" show that opened in London in 1910 and the famous 1913 Armory Show at the Art Institute of Chicago.[84] She was also extremely philanthropic. Over the span of forty years, she would donate 2,225 works—and generous funding—to the Art Institute of Chicago, as well as additional works to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Library of Congress, and other institutions.[85]

Unlike La Motte, who was perennially worried about money and accustomed to traveling third class and staying in third-rate lodging, Chadbourne lived a life of wealth and refinement. As an American newspaper reported before the war, Chadbourne's home in London's elegant Mayfair district was "the gathering place for several groups of fashionables, notably those with a literary or artistic bent. All the great literary lions were to be found at her soirees and she entertained with great distinction."[86] One of Chadbourne's sisters, Frances Crane Lillie, visited London in March 1912 and wrote home of their leisurely days together, which were spent eating, shopping, walking about, and talking of art. (But she sensed an underlying unhappiness and void in Chadbourne's life. She noted, "This [home] is full of beautiful things, really holy things. They express my sister's delicacy, refinement and pain, and are a joy to her, a comfort, rather.")[87] By contrast, in March 1912 La Motte was living in the nurses' residence in Baltimore, and that month she wrote to a friend, "I don't know what I shall do for a holiday this year. It will be a very limited one, I know that, for as to time I have two weeks, and as to money, I'm in debt."[88] In short, La Motte and Chadbourne were both American women from prominent families, just a couple of years apart in age, yet in many ways they were a study in contrasts. La Motte was an avowed anarchist and a trained nurse, who had worked in the public health field for more than a decade. Chadbourne was an heiress and art collector, whose education had not extended beyond boarding school and who had never had a job.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, once their relationship began and La Motte was exposed to Chadbourne's opulent lifestyle, the social reformer began to question her own values. In March 1915 La Motte wrote, "I believe in millionaires, aristocracy, and idleness all at once, and those who are of them or profess them are no better or worse than any one else!" Then in the very next line she contradicted herself. "Or rather, I don't believe in them, but the things I did believe in are all busted up, blown over, torn down, and all that is left on a firm foundation are the things that all my life I have had little use for! War has reduced me to a bad plight!"[89] But Chadbourne, as much as the war, was muddling La Motte's old beliefs.

Their relationship also affected Chadbourne's old beliefs. Chadbourne would never become nearly as radical as La Motte, but she would devotedly

support La Motte's work for social change and provide generous financial help. Interestingly, two of Chadbourne's sisters were also quite radical, despite their great wealth. Frances Crane Lillie was a prominent social reformer in Chicago. In late 1915 she participated in the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union strike, was arrested, and publicly declared herself a socialist.[90] Another sister, Kate Crane Gartz, was a "millionaire socialist," who devoted her energy and financial resources to supporting leftist causes. (The famous muckraker Upton Sinclair called her a "tireless friend of all rebels in distress.") During World War I, she was an ardent pacifist and a staunch advocate for imprisoned war opponents.[91] La Motte's radical politics, thus, were surprisingly aligned with those of Chadbourne's two closest sisters.

La Motte and Chadbourne's relationship ultimately spanned more than forty-five years and was recognized and accepted, in a way, by both their families. When Chadbourne's sister Frances Crane Lillie visited in 1920, she wrote home, "Emily is dear, very dear and so is Miss La Motte." In another letter, she enthused, "Emily and Miss La Motte are too dear for words."[92] But the two women seem to have been perceived as sharing an intense friendship rather than a romantic relationship.

Reflecting the social norms and inhibitions of the era, they were not labeled, or necessarily even perceived, as lesbians. (Even today, aged relatives in Chadbourne's family who knew them are surprised by the suggestion that the two women were a couple.) Instead, Chadbourne's family members consistently referred to their bond as a friendship. As Crane's favorite niece would later write, "Some time during [the] war years Aunt Emily met Ellen LaMotte and they became fast friends. The friendship lasted until Miss LaMotte's death, in the early 1960s. . . . The ladies lived together, either in the same house, or in houses within a block of each other, from shortly after the First World War until Ellen LaMotte's death." The same niece further described La Motte as her aunt's "closest and most intimate friend."[93]

Similarly, La Motte's correspondence with Alfred I. duPont makes clear that Chadbourne was warmly accepted as La Motte's long-term companion but was perceived as something short of a spouse. Revealingly, she is consistently referred to in their letters as "Mrs. Chadbourne." (By contrast, duPont's wives—he had three in all—are always referred to by their first names.) In 1930, for example, duPont ended a letter to La Motte, "Lots of

love to you and affectionate regards to Mrs. Chadbourne." Likewise, in 1932 La Motte ended a letter to duPont, "Mrs. Chadbourne sends you her affectionate regards, and I send just heaps of love." In his letters, duPont also periodically joked about La Motte finding a husband. A telegram he sent her in December 1934 reads, "A million wishes for the happiest kind of Christmas and ten husbands in 1935."[94]

On the public stage as well, La Motte and Chadbourne's relationship remained cloaked in euphemisms and conservative conventions. For example, in 1932, when Chadbourne donated an antique desk to a Vermont senator, she was described in the *Burlington Free Press* as the "friend and confidante of Ellen La Motte, the writer."[95] Even recent scholars have often misrepresented their relationship, by referring to Chadbourne as La Motte's "long-term friend" or "close friend."[96]

Friendship with Gertrude Stein

During World War I, La Motte and Chadbourne jointly forged a deep and long-lasting relationship with Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas, the most famous lesbian couple then living in Paris' expatriate community. La Motte and Chadbourne had each known Stein and Toklas before the war, but their collective friendship solidified as they braved the first winter of the war. Indeed, Chadbourne would later recall how she "sat on a staircase with Gertrude Stein during the German bombardment of Paris" in March 1915. Stein describes the same period in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*: "It was not a very cheerful winter. People came in and out, new ones and old ones. Ellen La Motte turned up, she was very heroic but gun shy. She wanted to go to Serbia and Emily Chadbourne wanted to go with her but they did not go." And in the next sentence, Stein notes that she "wrote a little novelette about this event."[97]

That "little novelette" from 1915 is titled *How Could They Marry Her?* Intriguingly, it indicates that Stein had a romantic interest in La Motte at the time and was distinctly envious of Chadbourne. The work is written in Stein's highly experimental style, so extracting a precise meaning is challenging. Nonetheless, La Motte clearly is at the center of the piece, and as the title indicates, the underlying theme seems to be that La Motte has "married" the wrong "her." In a passage midway through the work, Stein

very clearly registers her unhappiness about La Motte's plan to go to Serbia with Chadbourne and alludes to Alfred I. duPont and his expertise as a munitions "powder man." She writes:

> I can understand perfectly well why she doesn't want to see me.
>
> She found that different ways of saying, I will not go alone, were not expected from one another. . . .
>
> How could they marry her.
>
> Serbia. What is powder. Powder is liquid and in movement and a cousin a cousin is willing to sacrifice her.
>
> What is a coward. A coward is anyone who is willing to go to Serbia. Who is willing to go to Serbia some one without a heart.

Later in the poem, Stein again fixates on the fact that Chadbourne would accompany La Motte, in a passage that begins, "She is going too. / Had you thought that she wasn't." Sprinkled throughout the work are also such emotionally charged lines as "Seeing her makes passion plain" and "Why are you capable of undertaking having two women."[98]

Whatever jealous tension may have existed that winter, however, did not prevent the two couples from establishing a long-lasting bond. They would remain in touch for decades and spend time together in France and America, as circumstances allowed. Stein would also write about her friends once again in 1920, in a poem titled "Emily Chadbourne." It begins, "Can you listen to Ellen," and ends, "And then we smiled at Emily."[99]

La Motte's letters to Stein from across the decades offer a glimpse into their enduring friendship and the special bond they shared as fellow authors. In 1925, for example, La Motte wrote to Stein, "I don't know whether I am making any money off that last book [*Snuffs and Butters*] or not. I should be, according to the reviews which are most satisfactory, but there is an awful hiatus between reviews and royalties." La Motte's letters also all conclude with warm words of affection. One message ends, "Love from us both to you both." Another reads, "Ever so much love from us both. We both feel that the nicest part of going back [to Paris] again will be to see you."[100]

La Motte's letters to Stein from the 1930s mention some important milestones in their friendship. After Stein published *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* in 1933, La Motte effused in a note to her, "We are both crazy over your autobiography, and our social standing has gone up tremen-

dously, through having been mentioned in it." Then, in a group of letters from late 1934, La Motte focused on Stein's upcoming speaking tour in the United States and their plans to spend time together. (Notably, in one of these letters, La Motte informs Stein that Eleanor Roosevelt "has sent a Command for you and Alice to take tea with her at the White House.") That year the four women spent New Year's Eve together at the home of Chadbourne's younger brother, Richard Crane, in Virginia. Then the women all reunited in Chicago in March.[101]

In sadder times, too, the depth of the four women's friendship is revealed in La Motte's correspondence. When Stein died in 1946, La Motte wrote to Toklas,

> Em and I were heartbroken this morning to hear over the radio about our beloved Gertrude. The dear friend of half a life time. We are so shocked and distressed and our first thoughts are for you. We sat together this morning filled with sorrow and talking over Gertrude in all the ways and in all the places we have known her—nearly forty years of love and friendship.

In the same letter, Chadbourne invited Toklas to visit and stay in her guest house "for as long as you like."[102]

Apart from having been a beloved friend, Stein also seems to have had a significant influence on La Motte as a writer, especially in the period leading up to *Backwash*. When La Motte was first living in Paris and was befriended by Stein, she renounced her old style of writing in favor of a more experimental and self-expressive form. Then when La Motte returned to Paris early in the war, and Stein wrote her "little novelette," the two women again figured large in each other's lives. Although it is impossible to know the extent to which *Backwash* was shaped by Stein's influence, La Motte's bold flaunting of conventions, of both style and subject, suggests Stein's strong sway.

The French Field Hospital in Belgium

In late spring 1915, following months of frustrated searching, La Motte was finally offered a volunteer nursing position at a military field hospital in Belgium. The American writer Mary Borden—another expatriate heiress from Chicago—had received special permission to establish and equip the

hospital, at her own expense, for the French army.[103] The French military command appointed the doctors and orderlies, but Borden was allowed to select the staff of American, British, and French nurses. With Borden in the role of director and La Motte among its initial group of nurses, the Hôpital Chirurgical Mobile No. 1 opened in July 1915 outside the little village of Roesbrugge, situated roughly ten kilometers behind the firing line.[104]

Describing the hospital, one of La Motte's fellow nurses wrote, "Within the space encircled by our hedge there are sixteen wooden shacks in all, eight of them wards in which about one hundred and forty patients can be cared for." The other shacks included an operating room with a "radiographic cabinet," a pharmacy, kitchens, a room for receiving new patients, a wash house, a linen room, and the doctors' and nurses' quarters, as well as assorted tents for additional staff members.[105]

From late June 1915 through early June 1916, La Motte would alternate long stretches of work at the hospital with extended breaks that she would spend in Paris or taking restorative vacations in Southern France and Spain. Before she ever arrived at the hospital, however, La Motte experienced a traumatic introduction to the war zone. She had departed Paris on June 20 with other nurses and arrived in the French port city of Dunkirk, where they were supposed to wait for several days in a hotel on the city's outskirts until the newly built field hospital was ready to receive them. During their second night at the hotel, long-range German artillery began to shell the city and its surroundings. La Motte recorded the harrowing event in an essay, "Under Shell-Fire at Dunkirk," which appeared several months later in the *Atlantic Monthly*.[106] In it she describes the "feeling of cold terror" she experienced when she came under shellfire on the streets of Dunkirk and the unnerving afternoon she and the other nurses spent waiting out the bombardment. The experience left La Motte deeply shaken but not deterred. As Chadbourne informed Stein, "Miss La Motte finally got off to Dunkerque and they had a bombardment for her the other day and she has had enough but I expect she will stick out a little longer."[107]

Once La Motte at last arrived at the field hospital in Belgium, and it began to receive patients, she settled into a routine of caring for wounded and ill French soldiers from the nearby battlefront. She nursed men just out of surgery, who had been operated on for ghastly injuries to their heads, abdomens, and limbs. She nursed patients whose wounds had become gan-

grenous and emitted vile odors. She nursed sick soldiers, both young and old, who had spent weeks exposed to raw weather in the trenches. And when she took her turn as a night nurse, she attended to wards of patients, who slept fitfully as artillery guns roared nearby and shells exploded, rattling the flimsy hospital sheds and the nerves of those within them. Some men died soon after their arrival. Others were transferred to hospitals farther from the front. And still others remained at the field hospital for weeks or even months.

As Chadbourne further reported to Stein in August 1915, "Miss La Motte is about 13 miles from Ypres in a moving hospital (that doesn't move). She wanted to go but was frightened to death."[108] Similarly, Stein herself later recorded,

> Ellen La Motte and Emily Chadbourne . . . had not gone to Serbia. . . . Ellen La Motte, who was an ex Johns Hopkins nurse, wanted to nurse near the front. She was still gun shy but she did want to nurse at the front, and they met Mary [Borden] who was running a hospital at the front and Ellen La Motte did for a few months nurse at the front.[109]

Though "gun shy," La Motte had surmounted her fears and remained at the hospital through early fall. As Chadbourne recorded that September, "Miss La Motte is still 'fronting' it."[110] In early October, La Motte finally returned to Paris and then spent a couple of weeks on vacation with Chadbourne in the south of France, before resettling into her Paris home.[111]

The Backwash of War

While La Motte was in Paris in December 1915, she completed the first two stories of *The Backwash of War*. On December 18 she finished "Heroes," about a soldier who screams and spits blood, while the hospital staff struggles to save his life against his will. The next day she completed "La Patrie Reconnaissante," about a drafted Parisian taxi driver who is fatally wounded. La Motte writes, "He died after three days' cursing and raving. Before he died, that end of the ward smelled foully, and his foul words, shouted at the top of his delirious voice, echoed foully. Everyone was glad when it was over."

Even as La Motte wrote about the horrors of the field hospital, however, she prepared for her return to its wards. On the same day that La Motte

finished her tale of the taxi driver's foul death, Chadbourne reported to Stein, "Miss La Motte . . . is now thinking of returning to the front." Several weeks later, in mid-January 1916, La Motte traveled back to the field hospital, with plans to remain for at least a month.[112]

Before she left Paris, though, she mailed copies of her two completed stories to Mary Lent in America. Lent received them in early February and judged them to be "true stories, which are awfully well done and interesting, but ghastly." On La Motte's behalf, Lent submitted them to the *Atlantic Monthly*, and a little more than a week later, she happily reported to Alfred I. duPont, "I wrote Ellen [and] gave her the thrill of having another of her articles accepted by the Atlantic Monthly, the title of which is 'Heroes.'" She added, "Mr. Sedgwick, the Editor, is most complimentary, and I am sure it will please Ellen very much."[113]

By late February 1916, La Motte had once again returned to her apartment in Paris, where she received the welcome news from Lent and continued work on *Backwash*. In a letter to her friend Amy Wesselhoeft von Erdberg, she reflected, "This has been a tremendous year for me, and I have gone . . . pretty close into human emotions. Also I have been rather fortunate with my writing." She was delighted that "the conservative old *Atlantic Monthly*" had not only published her article about the Dunkirk bombardment but had also accepted "Heroes," and she was pleased with her progress on her new book. As she confided to Wesselhoeft, "You know how I have always wanted to write. I am now planning another book—this time my book, me. The last one [*The Tuberculosis Nurse*] was not me. I have made a good start on this new book. 2 tenths are finished, the other 8 tenths blocked out & in the rough ready to be finished in the next few months."[114] But before completing *Backwash*, which would expand to thirteen stories, La Motte went on a long vacation with Chadbourne to Spain and then returned for a final time to the field hospital.

In October 1915, La Motte had applied at the American Embassy in Paris for permission to visit Spain, a neutral country in the war, stating as the purpose of the visit "Health."[115] But fearing trouble at the Spanish border, she and Chadbourne had postponed the trip. In March 1916, they finally left for Spain, with the intention to "travel along the East coast and then to Granada and Seville for Easter." Along the way, they hoped to reunite with

Stein and Toklas, who had been living in Spain since the prior spring. By mid-March, they had made it as far as Barcelona and were headed to Grenada, but as Chadbourne admitted in a postcard to Stein, "We have not as yet had our courage up to enter the 'Arena.'"[116] Perhaps La Motte had seen enough of gore without attending a bullfight.

After returning to Paris and completing several more stories for *Backwash*, La Motte returned to the field hospital in May. There she resumed her work in the wards and took a harrowing daytrip that carried her terrifyingly close to the frontline at Ypres. She detailed the misadventure in an essay ironically titled "A Joy Ride," which appeared in October 1916 in the *Atlantic Monthly*.[117] La Motte sets the scene as follows: "It was a gray afternoon, rather cold, the end of May." Then she adds, "I like gray weather, preferably rainy weather, as it means less bombarding, less activity on the part of the guns. I hate the guns." But the weather cleared, and despite her fears and precautions, she soon found herself all too close to the trenches and under fire. First came a shellfire attack. Then came an aerial attack from a German bomber.

La Motte kept as a reminder of the experience an empty three-inch shell from an English antiaircraft gun. As Gertrude Stein later wryly recorded, "Ellen La Motte collected a set of souvenirs of the war for her cousin Dupont. . . . The stories of how she got them were diverting."[118] What Stein left unsaid, though, is that La Motte's relationship with Alfred I. duPont—and the DuPont Company—had an incongruous dimension during the war years.

Throughout the time that La Motte volunteered as a war nurse and wrote *Backwash*, which would be hailed as America's most important antiwar work, her cousin continued to support her financially. Paradoxically, his wealth was derived from the DuPont Company, America's most important manufacturer of military munitions. In fact, as America's leading producer of military explosives in World War I, DuPont reaped huge profits from supplying the Allies and later the US Army. In 1915, for example, Britain paid DuPont one hundred million dollars to expand the capacity of its explosive division, and from 1914 to 1915, the company's annual production of smokeless powder grew more than twentyfold, to two hundred million pounds. As a historian would later note, "It is not often in the course of human events,

that there is such a stupendous, golden mating of men and opportunity as that which was realized by the Du Ponts in the World War of 1914."[119]

La Motte's explosive book thus was essentially underwritten by the sale of actual explosives. Ironically, the British antiaircraft shell that La Motte kept as a souvenir of her "joy ride" could well have been filled with powder manufactured by DuPont, and it could well have killed her. La Motte notes in her essay that if the shell had fallen on the "flimsy little wooden hut" where she had taken cover, instead of less than a hundred feet away, "it would have smashed up the shelter completely."

At least from the distance of time, it seems strange that, even as she was volunteering at the front, La Motte was supported with the DuPont Company's wartime profits. Equally puzzling is the fact that she chose to purchase shares of DuPont stock, even as she was working as a war nurse. In fact, the forty-dollar check she received from the *Atlantic Monthly* in February 1916 for her story "Heroes"—about the suicidal soldier at the field hospital—went directly toward the purchase of shares of DuPont stock, with Mary Lent managing the transaction.[120] Why did La Motte invest her own limited earnings in the munitions manufacturer, given her aversion to war? And what of the fact that she was a socialist, and even an avowed anarchist, who empathized with the working-class soldiers on both sides of the battle lines? Whatever the oddity of the situation, La Motte collected her trove of war souvenirs, including the antiaircraft shell, for her beloved cousin. So, too, she continued to help mend men, even as DuPont manufactured the munitions that blew other men apart.

Not long after her harrowing "joy ride" in late May 1916, La Motte left the Hôpital Chirurgical Mobile No. 1 for a final time and returned to Paris, where she soon completed the hospital stories for *Backwash*. The last two, which she dated June 26 and June 27, are "At the Telephone," about a soldier who dies on the operating table, and "A Citation," about a solider from a criminal battalion who proves surprisingly heroic. But the final story in the book, "An Incident," is undated and concerns a tragic traffic accident on the streets of Paris. A horse tramples a teenage delivery boy, and a cold-hearted military officer reacts with bored indifference. La Motte writes of the boy's injury, "War itself could not have been more disastrous."

With the manuscript safely packed for the voyage, La Motte and Chadbourne sailed for America on July 1, leaving behind war-torn Europe. They

traveled aboard *La Touraine*—the same ship that had carried La Motte to Europe in fall 1914—and reached New York on July 11.[121] The following day, La Motte took her manuscript to G. P. Putnam's Sons, which had published *The Tuberculosis Nurse*, and within two weeks, *Backwash* was accepted for publication and scheduled to appear in early September.[122]

La Motte, who had been so ambivalent about her nursing textbook, was clearly pleased with *Backwash*. "I think you will like it," she wrote to Amy Wesselhoeft von Erdberg. "You will like the style, I hope, and also see that in a measure I am finding myself. . . . It consists of thirteen sketches, and the name is 'The Backwash of War.'"[123]

At the time of *Backwash*'s publication, however, La Motte would not be in the United States. Instead, after spending just six weeks in the country, she embarked with Chadbourne on an extended tour of Asia.

Travels in Asia

A year before, in August 1915, Chadbourne had written to Stein, "I think when [the] war is over I shall ask Miss La M. to go with me to the interior of China and live on a house boat." Although the war continued long beyond expectations, Chadbourne had put her plan into effect. With *Backwash* completed and its publication arranged, the two women made preparations for an extended trip to Asia. As La Motte wrote in a letter, "We expect to do a long journey into the interior of China. . . . We expect to be gone about a year."[124]

Both women applied for special passports for the trip and stated their intention to visit Japan, China, and Indochina for "purposes of travel and study." Interestingly, La Motte listed her occupation on the application as "writer," whereas she had formerly listed it as "trained nurse." Also, in an affidavit attached to Chadbourne's application, La Motte attested, "I have been acquainted for a great many years with Mrs. Emily Crane Chadbourne of Chicago." This statement, if true, would indicate that the women knew each other long before they became a couple.[125]

After their passports were issued, and they had visited Chadbourne's family in Chicago, the two women traveled to California, then to Hawaii, and then set sail for Japan. They departed in early September and arrived after more than two weeks at sea. Once in Asia, they spent several weeks exploring Japan and Korea, before traveling to China, where they temporarily

settled in Peking. Later on in their nearly yearlong adventure, they also visited Hong Kong, French Indochina, Siam, and Singapore.[126]

It was a notably bold trip for two American women to make, and they made it all the more daring by visiting such remote destinations as the overgrown ruins of the Angkor temple group in Cambodia, which was then part of French Indochina. As La Motte later explained in an essay titled "The Ruins of Angkor," once they had arrived—via steamboat, sampan, and buffalo cart—in the interior of Cambodia and had begun to travel on elephant back through the tropical jungle, they found the area around Angkor in a state of unrest that was "partly chronic, partly augmented by the backwash of a revolution that had occurred some months ago."[127] Amazingly, within a little more than six months, La Motte thus witnessed both the backwash of war in Europe and the backwash of revolution in Asia.

During their travels, La Motte and Chadbourne spent the most time in Peking, where they first arrived in October 1916 and later returned in February 1917. In a series of letters, eventually published as *Peking Dust* (1919), La Motte provides a written record of her impressions of what she calls both the "beautiful, barbaric capital of China" and the "great, gorgeous capital of Asia." She describes, for example, Peking's streets crowded with camels, official carriages, and rickshaws pulled by ragged boys. The captivating capital deeply appealed to La Motte. As she wrote in November 1916, "We are on the verge of . . . settling right here—I was almost going to say for life!"[128]

Significantly, her travels in Asia provided La Motte with a new perspective on the war in Europe. Early in her stay in Peking, she wrote, "Coming as we have direct from France,—two years of France in war-time,—it is very curious to find ourselves plunged into this atmosphere of total indifference to the outcome and objects of the war." Later, after having had more time to contemplate the situation, she added, "One thing stands out clearly,—our whole visit to the East has confirmed it,—and that is that this European war had its origin in the Orient. Supremacy in the Orient, control of the Far East—that is the underlying cause of the struggle which is rending Europe in twain."[129] In other words, Western imperialism was responsible for the war.

During her time in Asia, La Motte also became deeply concerned about another ugly manifestation of Western imperialism: the pernicious opium trade. She investigated the issue in every country she visited and was hor-

rified to discover what she later described as a "complete, systematic arrangement, by which the foreign government[s] profited at the expense of the subject peoples under [their] rule."[130] England and other colonial powers cynically fostered the cultivation, manufacture, and sale of opium in their colonies, even as they severely restricted its use at home.

La Motte's concern about the destructive opium trade did not diminish after she left Asia. To the contrary, from the time she returned to America through to the early 1930s, she dedicated her energies, as a public health advocate and writer, to spearheading an international crusade against opium, with Chadbourne's moral and financial support. As Gertrude Stein would succinctly state in the early 1930s, "She and Emily Chadbourne went to China and after that became leaders of the anti-opium campaign."[131]

Return to Wartime America

In summer 1917, La Motte and Chadbourne returned to America, where *The Backwash of War* had been in circulation for nearly a year and was enjoying strong sales. In England and France, the book had been immediately banned for being critical of the war. But in America it was broadly praised for revealing the unvarnished truth. The radical press in particular embraced the work. A writer for *Issues and Events: American Liberal Review* claimed, "[La Motte] has rendered an invaluable service to mankind. The world must be prepared for peace, and the only way to accomplish this end is to expose the loathsome truths regarding modern warfare."[132]

Although La Motte was pleased with *Backwash*'s success, her focus had largely shifted from the war in Europe to the opium trade in Asia. In early 1918, she and Chadbourne made preliminary plans for a return trip to Asia, but in wartime America, it proved too risky for them to apply for the special passports they would require. *Backwash* was widely hailed as an antiwar work, and Alfred I. duPont cautioned his cousin:

> Undoubtedly, before such passports could be issued a very careful investigation would be made by the Secret Service Department, with a view to establishing so far as possible the unquestioned loyalty of both you and Mrs. Chadbourne to the United States, and if peradventure it should come to the ears of the State Department that either Mrs. Chadbourne

> or yourself had voiced a position of absolute neutrality, you may be sure that no passports would be issued, but on the contrary you would immediately be placed under surveillance, if nothing worse.

Then he added, "As you have perhaps discovered, the feeling in this country is running pretty high on the question of loyalty and is going to take on even more drastic and determined features before this war is over."[133] Put simply, duPont warned La Motte that it would be ill advised to invite the scrutiny of the State Department at a time when the Espionage Act of 1917 had curtailed freedom of speech and made it illegal "to interfere with the operation or success of the military or naval forces of the United States." As the author of an antiwar book, La Motte arguably had already run amuck of the law's provisions.

Moreover, La Motte's politics were radical, and she made no effort to disguise the fact. Indeed, in early 1918 she became a contributing editor for a new socialist journal, the *Liberator*, which openly supported the Russian Revolution and opposed the war in Europe. In fact, the *Liberator* was the successor to the *Masses*, which had ceased publication in 1917, after it ran afoul of the Espionage Act. Then, in late summer 1918, the *Liberator* was nearly censored precisely because it endorsed *The Backwash of War* in a two-line advertisement.

By this point, *Backwash* had been through four printings and was widely hailed as an important and unique work of American war writing. As duPont had written to La Motte in February 1918, "I am more than pleased to hear of the success which you have experienced with your book."[134] But when the small advertisement for *Backwash* appeared in the *Liberator*'s September issue, the powerful postmaster general suddenly banned the book, and its publisher withdrew it from sale. After nearly two years of unfettered circulation, *The Backwash of War* would remain suppressed for the remainder of the war.[135]

Meanwhile, having abandoned her plans to return to Asia, La Motte remained in America. She spent much of the summer of 1918 visiting friends in the Catskill Mountains of New York, where she learned to drive. Then in October, when the influenza pandemic struck New York City, she donned her nursing uniform for a final time. As she later recounted to duPont, "I went to work in an influenza hospital during the height of the epidemic. Got

it myself after that and was pretty sick for about a month." But ill as she was, she was determined to cast a ballot in that fall's elections. Months earlier, she had officially registered to vote as a Republican in New York, where women had recently won the franchise. (Women in Maryland still had not.) On Election Day, she left her sickbed to vote for the first time. Afterward she wrote to duPont, "I voted the straight Republican ticket . . . and then returned to my bed for another week!"[136]

She was still sick abed when World War I finally ended on November 11, 1918.

Anti-opium Crusade

In the period immediately after the war, La Motte was focused on completing two books, both based on her travels in Asia. "I find myself rushingly busy," she recorded in January 1919.[137] Later that year, the compilation of her travel letters, *Peking Dust*, which included a forceful condemnation of the opium trade, was published, as was a book of her short stories, *Civilization: Tales of the Orient*.

Three of the stories in *Civilization* had previously appeared in *Century* magazine, including "Under a Wine-Glass," which was also selected for *The Best Short Stories of 1919*. The story bears certain interesting parallels to La Motte's own life. It recounts the tale of a poor but talented author who falls in love with a fabulously wealthy woman. But unlike La Motte, the author in the story is male, and he flees to a desert island in the Gulf of Siam after his talent vanishes amid his new life of luxury. In the unspoiled purity of the East, he vainly hopes to regain his lost genius.

Most stories in *Civilization*, though, read as far more direct condemnations of Western imperialism, and many of them touch on the subject of opium. In one story, a native man rebukes a smug bishop from England. "What is this Colony, Sir," he asks, "but a market for the opium your Government sells?" Then he adds, "We are helpless, defenceless, powerless to protect ourselves."[138] La Motte's attack on Western hypocrisy is unmistakable. As one book reviewer noted, "The writing throughout is brilliant and striking, and Miss La Motte never fails to make her point in contrasting what we call 'civilization' with the life and standards of the East." Another book critic commented, "Ellen La Motte bloomed overnight as a writer of short stories. 'The Backwash of War' made her a reputation, and

'Civilization' . . . will do something toward making the reputation permanent. She is brutally cynical, with a strong undertow of pessimism."[139]

La Motte was determined to fight against the opium trade as she had earlier fought against the spread of tuberculosis, but she had yet to determine the best way to pursue that goal. In spring 1920, she contemplated making a return trip to Asia, to visit China, Japan, and Siam, but eventually decided against it.[140] To further her anti-opium efforts, she ultimately concluded it would be most practical for her to live in England. There she could attempt to sway British politicians and could also readily attend the League of Nations' regular conferences on opium held in Geneva.

After a long visit to Paris in fall 1920, La Motte settled in London, and she remained based there throughout the 1920s, although she regularly returned to America, sometimes for extended stays. Indeed, in 1930 she calculated, "I have crossed the ocean at least forty times." And in an essay titled "The Christmas Boat," she quite humorously describes the most harrowing of these voyages, which took place in December 1927. As she recounts, she embarked in London aboard a small and inexpensive freight ship, accompanied by her rare pet cockatoo. Then the boat ran into a colossal four-day storm and nearly sunk while en route to New York. She wittily writes, "One was not imagining danger—it would have taken far more imagination to think the contrary."[141]

Throughout the 1920s, the central focus of La Motte's writing, as of her advocacy work, remained the anti-opium campaign. In the course of the decade, she wrote three more books to further the cause—*The Opium Monopoly* (1920), *The Ethics of Opium* (1924), and *Opium in Geneva: Or How the Opium Problem Is Handled by the League of Nations* (1929)—as well as numerous articles for the *Atlantic Monthly*, the *Nation*, *Harper's Magazine*, and other highly regarded periodicals.[142] As an indefatigable advocate, she also met with politicians in London and Washington, regularly attended the meetings of the League of Nations in Geneva, joined the advisory board of such organizations as the Council on Turkish-American Relations, lectured on college campuses, and generally did her best to engage all interested parties. In fact, in 1922 it was widely reported that she was the last person to visit England's august Lord Bryce before he died, and that he had been "more than a little disturbed by her revelations to him" about England's role in the opium trade. (Ironically, Bryce had produced the infamous Bryce

Report during the first year of World War I, which "documented" lurid tales of German wartime atrocities and further fueled wartime enmity.)[143]

As La Motte wrote to duPont in 1924, "Getting people interested in opium is my main work at present."[144] And both in America and abroad, she was considered a foremost expert in the field. Notably, a congressman, who introduced a bill in 1928 intended to address opium addiction in the United States, stated in a hearing, "In my opinion, she is the best informed woman in the world on the opium question."[145]

Among those determined to address the opium crisis, La Motte was revered, but her advocacy work also put her at odds with those who benefited from the opium trade. As she wrote in a letter in December 1928, "I had to go to Geneva in September, and am going again in January, [to attend the League of Nations] opium meetings, at which I appear in the role of a Perfect Pest."[146] Earlier that year, she had outlined the problem in an article that appeared in the *New York American*. A bloc of countries—Great Britain, Holland, France, Switzerland, and Germany—benefited from opium's cultivation, manufacture, and trade. These countries dominated the League of Nations Opium Committee and banded together to prevent any meaningful attempts to eliminate or restrict the opium traffic. As La Motte angrily explained, "The most powerful countries in the world [are] engaged in the most lucrative traffic—that of poisoning people in the five continents and the seven seas! The whole opium question can be summed up in two words: Bad faith."[147]

Even when she was not explicitly writing about opium, La Motte's literary focus remained on Asia and Western imperialism. In 1925 she published *Snuffs and Butters*, a collection of ironic and often barbed stories about what happens when East meets West. As one reviewer noted, "The title story . . . is an account of a young Chinese student's rude awakening to Western civilization in London. The neat manner in which civilization is identified with the Oriental and savagery discovered in Bloomsbury is—oh, quite delightful."[148]

During the years that La Motte was living in London, she and Chadbourne also traveled together in Europe and in Africa. Notably, in 1926 they accompanied a group of Crane family members and friends to Egypt, where they voyaged on a steamer up the Nile and visited Cairo and Luxor. Then in 1930, La Motte and Chadbourne traveled to Abyssinia (modern-day Ethiopia) to attend the coronation of Emperor Haile Selassie and witness

what La Motte hoped would be a unique spectacle in "the only bit [of Africa] not under European control." After traveling for twelve days by boat to French Somaliland and then making a five-hundred-mile train trip, they arrived in Abyssinia's capital and found themselves among fewer than twenty Western guests, apart from dignitaries and journalists.[149]

After returning from the long trip, La Motte wrote two essays for *Harper's Magazine* based on her travels. In "The Three Widows: The True Story of an International Crisis," she traces the sequence of events leading to a colonial uprising in French Somaliland. And in the more intimate "A Coronation in Abyssinia," she writes about her own adventures and misadventures, including being housed in a converted cowshed infested with army ants.[150] Interestingly, though, La Motte leaves her readers in the dark as to the gender of her traveling companion by referring to Chadbourne throughout the essay as simply "E." But the acerbic British novelist Evelyn Waugh, who met the couple at the coronation, where he was a special correspondent, painted a none-too-flattering picture of the two women together:

> [They were] two formidable ladies in knitted suits and topees; though unrelated by blood, long companionship had made them almost indistinguishable, square-jawed, tight-lipped, with hard, discontented eyes. For them the whole coronation was a profound disappointment. What did it matter that they were witnesses of a unique stage of the interpenetration of two cultures? They were out for Vice. They were collecting material, in fact, for a little book on the subject . . . and every minute devoted to Coptic ritual or displays of horsemanship was a minute wasted. Prostitution and drug traffic comprised their modest interests, and they were too dense to find evidence of either.[151]

But this was a decidedly uncharitable view of the women and diminished the extraordinary role La Motte played as America's most prominent anti-opium crusader.

The 1930s and Beyond

In October 1931, the "two formidable ladies" moved back to the United States, which was in the grip of the Great Depression. As Alfred I. duPont wrote La Motte that November, "There is so much hunger and distress everywhere."[152] Even Chadbourne felt a financial pinch, for the first time

in her life. Her huge income had been totally derived from dividends from the Crane Company, but the Depression had resulted in a huge drop in demand for the company's products and, consequently, an operating loss. As Chadbourne would confide to Stein in early 1934, "I haven't seen a dividend in three years."[153] A couple of years later, Chadbourne's sense of financial insecurity was compounded by her discovery that her longtime financial adviser had embezzled $450,000 of her funds. As a result, Chadbourne entrusted to La Motte the future handling of all her financial affairs.[154] (La Motte had long taken an active interest in the stock market, and in 1932, she and Chadbourne had regularly attended the hearings of the Senate Banking and Finance Committee investigating the stock market's crash. Thoroughly unimpressed, La Motte had concluded, "That Committee knows no more about the Stock Exchange than a baby.")[155]

In the early 1930s, La Motte also reassessed her political affiliation. She had always been a staunch Republican, but in 1932, she voted for the Democratic candidate, Franklin Delano Roosevelt. As she wrote in a published explanation of her decision, "I have been a Republican all my life, but this present administration [of Herbert Hoover] is too much for me to swallow. . . . For 12 years the Republicans have been in office, and the last four years have seen the climax of maladministration."[156]

Once President Roosevelt took office, La Motte was invited to the White House on several occasions. After the first of these visits, in April 1933, she sent an approving description of Eleanor Roosevelt to duPont and noted the First Lady's concern about the opium trade. (DuPont responded, "If she is interested in opium, you certainly can hand her the 'dope.'") The following January La Motte visited the White House again, to attend a diplomatic reception, and reported to duPont, "When I shook hands with the President he said 'How do you do, Miss La Motte. Happy New Year.' Which was more of a greeting than I expected. I have had to go to see Mrs. Roosevelt a couple of times, about opium, so perhaps they knew me."[157]

In this same period, La Motte scaled back her writing and anti-opium work. She wrote little in 1932 and 1933, but then in early 1934, she reported to Gertrude Stein, "I have been doing a lot of writing along my own line." She had just contributed an article, "Manchukuo and the Opium Trade," to the *Nation* and had also completed an article about opium intended for *Fortune*.[158]

Later in 1934, La Motte arranged for the republication of *The Backwash of War*. She happily informed duPont, "Putnam's [is] going to bring out a new edition of that old book of mine." She wrote an additional story, to be placed as the final piece in the volume, a darkly humorous tale about a pet goat that she titled "Esmeralda." Her editor at Putnam's felt it made "a most delightful ending." She also wrote a new introduction for the volume, which recounted the history of the book's censorship and implicitly warned about the dangers of peacetime complacency. The new edition of the book was released in August. Several weeks later, duPont wrote to La Motte from Wilmington, Delaware, and wryly noted, "I saw your book in a local book shop here, but, as I knew it was a replica of the original edition, which I have, I did not cough up any spondulics. I have heard indirectly, however, that quite a number of copies have been purchased."[159]

Once the new edition appeared, however, La Motte ceased publishing essays, stories, and books. In a letter to Stein in early 1936, she admitted, "I have not been writing—I don't seem to want to. Who wants to hear about opium in these troubled times? The Stock Exchange takes up my time—and brings me in quite a nice return. I am having lots of fun with it."[160]

La Motte's years of prolific writing and tireless advocacy work were now behind her. She still gave an occasional lecture, such as one she delivered in 1937, to her neighbors in New York's Hudson Valley, on the subject of international narcotic control.[161] She also continued to show up for major events, such as a ceremony marking the incorporation of the World Women's Party in 1938.[162] But she had effectively retired from public life.

La Motte and Chadbourne, both in their sixties and done living abroad, settled into a domestic routine in the United States, dividing their time between summers in Stone Ridge, New York, where Chadbourne years earlier had purchased a historic estate, and winters in Washington, DC, where La Motte bought and fixed up a series of houses in Georgetown. A journalist who interviewed La Motte in late 1951 in one of these homes admired the "antique-filled living room with its Victorian type plants, its red-velvet chairs, paintings, busts and statue of General Grant," as well as La Motte's pet parrot, Albert. The journalist also admired La Motte, who looked and acted much younger than her age. Asked by the journalist how she now spent her time, the seventy-eight-year-old

La Motte answered, "Albert, my friends and the stock market keep me interested."[163]

Indeed, during these decades, La Motte ably demonstrated her talent in her role as Chadbourne's financial manager. Through her shrewd investments in the 1940s and 1950s, she earned Chadbourne more than one million dollars. Even more notably, in the late 1950s, she helped revitalize the poorly performing Crane Company, of which Chadbourne owned the single largest block of stock. Against the Crane family's strong opposition, La Motte convinced Chadbourne to back an outside investor named T. M. Evans and allow him to take managing control. In 1959 Evans became Crane's new chairman and chief executive, and as La Motte had predicted, the company and its shareholders greatly prospered.[164]

By the late 1950s, though, La Motte's health had deteriorated. In earlier decades, she had endured assorted illnesses and health crises: diphtheria in 1897, appendicitis in 1912, Spanish influenza in 1918, a tonsillectomy in 1919, surgery to remove a cyst in her breast in 1925, food poisoning in 1928 and again in 1930, when she was visiting Abyssinia, and more. But she had always recovered and regained her full vigor. In the end, she succumbed to heart trouble that had plagued her for many years.[165] She died in her home in Washington, DC, on March 2, 1961, at the age of eighty-seven. Two days later, Chadbourne turned ninety.

The two women's relationship had lasted more than forty-six years, and the elderly Chadbourne now found herself most unhappily alone. As a niece later recorded, "Mrs. Chadbourne was desolated. She had leaned very heavily on Miss LaMotte for companionship, advice, and affection." Several years earlier, La Motte had sent a condolence letter to a Stone Ridge neighbor and friend named Katherine Hasbrouck, whose own long-term partner, Anna Budenbach, had died. La Motte wrote, "Emily and I keep thinking of you all the time—and there is nothing we can do to help you in this deep grief but to tell you of our love." It was now Chadbourne's turn to receive condolence letters. As her own health deteriorated over the following years, Chadbourne was cared for by nurses and eventually hospitalized. She died in December 1964.[166]

Conclusion

Ellen N. La Motte was an extraordinary American woman who bore bold witness to World War I in *The Backwash of War* and in her war essays. She also was notably bold in many other aspects of her life. As a member of one of America's most prominent industrialist families, she pursued a nursing career over her relatives' strong objections. As a tuberculosis nurse, she tenaciously challenged the status quo and argued for segregating highly infectious patients. As a socialist and self-proclaimed anarchist, she challenged America's social order and fought for a host of social reforms. As a suffragist, she championed the cause of women's votes, on two continents. As a lesbian, she declared herself willing to withstand social censure to be with the woman she loved. As an expatriate, she left her job as superintendent of the Tuberculosis Division in Baltimore to pursue her dream of being a writer. As a war nurse, she traded the safety of a large hospital in Paris for the dangers of a field hospital in the war zone. As an adventurer, she journeyed to unconventional and far-flung destinations, including the jungles of Cambodia and the remote capital of Abyssinia. As an anti-opium advocate, she attacked colonialism and the role it played in the pernicious drug trade. And as manager of Chadbourne's financial affairs, she determined the fate of the venerable Crane Company.

Few American writers of any era can boast such an astounding career or have contributed as much to improving the public weal. The "lost" classic, *The Backwash of War*, and its "lost" author, Ellen N. La Motte, well deserve our attention and further study.

Chronology

Nov. 27, 1873	Ellen Newbold La Motte is born in Louisville, Kentucky. She is educated by governesses and attends a private girls' school in Virginia.
1890	Moves to Wilmington, Delaware, to live in the home of her cousin Alfred I. duPont, a wealthy industrialist, and attends a finishing school in Philadelphia.
1899	Enters the Johns Hopkins Hospital Training School for Nurses in Baltimore, Maryland.
1902	Graduates from Johns Hopkins and then works as a nurse in the United States and Italy; begins to publish essays related to public health.
1905	Returns to Baltimore to work as a tuberculosis field nurse and publishes the first of many essays about the treatment of tuberculosis.
1910	Becomes director of the Tuberculosis Division of the Baltimore Board of Health and begins to play a prominent role in the city's suffrage movement.
June 1913	Leaves Baltimore to participate in England's militant suffrage movement, which she reports on for the *Baltimore Sun*.
Sept. 1913	Moves to Paris and writes her first book, *The Tuberculosis Nurse: Her Function and Her Qualifications*.

May 1914	Returns to London and prepares *The Tuberculosis Nurse* for publication.
June 28, 1914	*Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria assassinated in Sarajevo by a radical Bosnian-Serb, sparking World War I.*
Aug. 1, 1914	La Motte departs England to return to America.
Aug. 3–4, 1914	Germany declares war on France and invades neutral Belgium. The United States declares its neutrality.
Oct. 1914	La Motte travels to France to volunteer as a war nurse.
Oct. 19–Nov. 22, 1914	*First Battle of Ypres. Germany launches a major attack along the Western Front in northwestern Belgium.*
Nov. 1914	La Motte works for several weeks as a volunteer nurse in a large military hospital called the American Ambulance of Paris.
Winter 1914–1915	Begins an enduring relationship with Emily Crane Chadbourne, an heiress and art collector from Chicago.
April 22–May 25, 1915	*Second Battle of Ypres. German forces launch another offensive and use chlorine poison gas for the first time.*
June 1915	La Motte leaves Paris to work at a new French military field hospital in Belgium, located roughly ten miles from Ypres. While en route, she is caught in the French city of Dunkirk when it comes under German shellfire.
July 1915	Her essay "An American Nurse in Paris" is published in *Survey*.
July–Aug. 1915	*Fighting continues in the Ypres sector, with heavy casualties and little movement of the frontlines.*

Oct. 1915	La Motte returns to Paris and vacations with Chadbourne in the South of France.
Nov. 1915	Her essay "Under Shell-Fire at Dunkirk" is published in the *Atlantic Monthly*.
Dec. 1915	Completes "Heroes" and "La Patrie Reconnaissante," the first two stories in *The Backwash of War*.
Jan. 1916	Returns to the field hospital, where she remains from mid-January to mid-February.
Feb.–April 1916	*German diversionary attacks strike Allied forces in the area of the Ypres Salient.*
March 1916	La Motte departs with Chadbourne on a vacation in Spain and then completes additional stories for *The Backwash of War* in Paris.
May 1916	Returns to the field hospital and takes a terrifying "joy ride" near the frontlines at Ypres.
June 1916	Leaves the field hospital for a final time and returns to Paris, where she finishes *The Backwash of War*.
July 1916	Travels to the United States with Chadbourne.
Aug. 1916	Her story "Heroes" is published in the *Atlantic Monthly*.
Aug. 1916	Embarks with Chadbourne on a nearly yearlong trip to Asia, during which La Motte investigates the devastating impact of the international opium trade.
Sept. 1916	*The Backwash of War* is published in New York and London by G. P. Putnam's Sons and immediately suppressed in England and France.
Oct. 1916	Her essay "A Joy Ride" is published in the *Atlantic Monthly*.
April 1917	*America officially enters World War I.*

Aug. 1917	La Motte and Chadbourne return to America.
Aug. 1918	*The Backwash of War* is censored by the US postmaster general and withdrawn by its publisher.
Nov. 11, 1918	*World War I ends.*
1919	*The Backwash of War* is re-released in England and America, and La Motte publishes two new books, *Peking Dust* and *Civilization: Tales of the Orient*.
1920	La Motte moves to London, where, for the following decade, she spearheads an international anti-opium campaign, publishing multiple books and numerous essays on the topic.
1931	Moves with Chadbourne back to the United States, during the Great Depression.
1934	*The Backwash of War* is republished in a new edition, with an updated introduction and an additional story, "Esmeralda."
1935	La Motte retires from writing and advocacy work.
March 2, 1961	La Motte dies in Washington, DC.

The Backwash of War

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The Backwash of War

The Human Wreckage of the Battlefield
as Witnessed by an American
Hospital Nurse

By
Ellen N. La Motte

G. P. Putnam's Sons
New York and London
1916

Copyright, 1916
by
ELLEN N. LA MOTTE

To

MARY BORDEN-TURNER

"The Little Boss"

to whom I owe my experience in

the zone of the armies

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Introduction
(1916)

This war has been described as "Months of boredom, punctuated by moments of intense fright." The writer of these sketches has experienced many "months of boredom," in a French military field hospital, situated ten kilometres behind the lines, in Belgium.[1] During these months, the lines have not moved, either forward or backward, but have remained dead-locked, in one position. Undoubtedly, up and down the long-reaching kilometres of "Front" there has been action, and "moments of intense fright" have produced glorious deeds of valour, courage, devotion, and nobility. But when there is little or no action, there is a stagnant place, and in a stagnant place there is much ugliness. Much ugliness is churned up in the wake of mighty, moving forces. We are witnessing a phase in the evolution of humanity, a phase called War—and the slow, onward progress stirs up the slime in the shallows, and this is the Backwash of War. It is very ugly. There are many little lives foaming up in the backwash. They are loosened by the sweeping current, and float to the surface, detached from their environment, and one glimpses them, weak, hideous, repellent. After the war, they will consolidate again into the condition called Peace.

After this war, there will be many other wars, and in the intervals there will be peace. So it will alternate for many generations. By examining the things cast up in the backwash, we can gauge the progress of humanity. When clean little lives, when clean little souls boil up in the backwash, they will consolidate, after the final war, into a peace that shall endure. But not till then.

E. N. L. M

1. Between June 1915 and June 1916, La Motte worked for several long stretches as a volunteer nurse at Hôpital Chirurgical Mobile No. 1, a mobile French field hospital on the Western Front, located on the outskirts of the Belgian village of Roesbrugge.

Introduction
(1934)

THE BACKWASH OF WAR was first published in the autumn of 1916, and was suppressed in the summer of 1918. Until this happened it went through several printings, but the pictures presented—back of the scenes, so to speak—were considered damaging to the morale. In the flood of war propaganda pouring over the country, these dozen short sketches were considered undesirable.[1]

From its first appearance, this small book was kept out of England and France. But it did very well in the United States, until we entered the War. Even then, by some oversight, it continued to be sold, although suppression and censorship held full sway. In the summer of 1918, however, something happened. An issue of THE LIBERATOR[2] was held up—it could not be released until a certain objectionable passage was stamped out in black ink. This passage, it appears, was a reference to THE BACKWASH OF WAR. THE LIBERATOR carried a column in each issue of books specially recommended by the editor. In each issue, month after month, appeared a short paragraph of three or four lines, recommending THE BACKWASH OF WAR. So—when THE LIBERATOR was held up till this passage could be inked out, one suspected that something had happened to the BACKWASH itself.

No official notice was ever sent to me. After several weeks I ventured to inquire of the publishers what had happened. The Government, it appeared, did not care for the book.

1. There is a detailed history of the publication, reception, and censorship of *The Backwash of War* in this volume's introduction.

2. A radical magazine for which La Motte was a contributing editor.

"But why not? It reveals no military secrets. These sketches, while written of a French hospital, could apply equally well to any other hospital back of the lines—whether German, Russian or Serbian. They are true——"

"That is exactly the trouble," I was told. Truth, it appears, has no place in war.

Now that we are again going through a period of peace, it seems an opportune moment for a new edition of this book. The sketches were written in 1915 and 1916, when the writer was in a French military field hospital, a few miles behind the lines, in Belgium. War has been described as "months of boredom, punctuated by moments of intense fright." During this time at the Front, the lines moved little, either forward or backward, but were deadlocked in one position. Undoubtedly, up and down the long reaching kilometers of "Front" there was action, and "moments of intense fright" which produced fine deeds of valor, courage and nobility. But where there is little or no action there is a stagnant place, and in that stagnant place is much ugliness. Much ugliness is churned up in the wake of mighty, moving forces, and this is the backwash of war. Many little lives foam up in this backwash, loosened by the sweeping current, and detached from their environment. One catches a glimpse of them—often weak, hideous or repellent.

There can be no war without this backwash.

July 18, 1934 E. N. L. M.

Heroes

When he could stand it no longer, he fired a revolver up through the roof of his mouth, but he made a mess of it. The ball tore out his left eye, and then lodged somewhere under his skull, so they bundled him into an ambulance and carried him, cursing and screaming, to the nearest field hospital.[1] The journey was made in double-quick time, over rough Belgian roads. To save his life, he must reach the hospital without delay, and if he was bounced to death jolting along at breakneck speed, it did not matter. That was understood. He was a deserter, and discipline must be maintained. Since he had failed in the job, his life must be saved, he must be nursed back to health, until he was well enough to be stood up against a wall and shot.[2] This is War. Things like this also happen in peace time, but not so obviously.

At the hospital, he behaved abominably. The ambulance men declared that he had tried to throw himself out of the back of the ambulance, that he had yelled and hurled himself about, and spat blood all over the floor and blankets—in short, he was very disagreeable. Upon the operating table, he was no more reasonable. He shouted and screamed and threw himself from side to side, and it took a dozen leather straps and four or five orderlies to hold him in position, so that the surgeon could examine him. During this commotion, his left eye rolled about loosely upon his cheek, and from his bleeding mouth he shot great clots of stagnant blood, caring not where they

"Heroes" first appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly*, August 1916.

1. The story is set, as are most stories in this collection, in Hôpital Chirurgical Mobile No. 1, the French field hospital in Roesbrugge, Belgium, where La Motte worked as a volunteer nurse.

2. The soldier is considered a deserter for attempting suicide.

fell. One fell upon the immaculate white uniform of the Directrice,[3] and stained her, from breast to shoes. It was disgusting. They told him it was *La Directrice*, and that he must be careful. For an instant he stopped his raving, and regarded her fixedly with his remaining eye, then took aim afresh, and again covered her with his coward blood. Truly it was disgusting.

To the *Médecin Major*[4] it was incomprehensible, and he said so. To attempt to kill oneself, when, in these days, it was so easy to die with honour upon the battlefield, was something he could not understand. So the *Médecin Major* stood patiently aside, his arms crossed, his supple fingers pulling the long black hairs on his bare arms, waiting. He had long to wait, for it was difficult to get the man under the anæsthetic. Many cans of ether were used,[5] which went to prove that the patient was a drinking man. Whether he had acquired the habit of hard drink before or since the war could not be ascertained; the war had lasted a year now, and in that time many habits may be formed. As the *Médecin Major* stood there, patiently fingering the hairs on his hairy arms, he calculated the amount of ether that was expended—five cans of ether, at so many francs[6] a can—however, the ether was a donation from America, so it did not matter. Even so, it was wasteful.

At last they said he was ready. He was quiet. During his struggles, they had broken out two big teeth with the mouth gag, and that added a little more blood to the blood already choking him. Then the *Médecin Major* did a very skilful operation. He trephined[7] the skull, extracted the bullet that had lodged beneath it, and bound back in place that erratic eye. After which the man was sent over to the ward, while the surgeon returned hungrily to his dinner, long overdue.

In the ward, the man was a bad patient. He insisted upon tearing off his bandages, although they told him that this meant bleeding to death. His mind seemed fixed on death. He seemed to want to die, and was thoroughly

3. The directrice (director) of the hospital was the Chicago heiress Mary Borden, who later published her own war memoir, *The Forbidden Zone* (London: Heinemann, 1929). La Motte dedicated *The Backwash of War* to her, using her married name, Mary Borden-Turner.

4. Army doctor.

5. Ether was used as an anesthetic in surgery.

6. French unit of money.

7. Used a specific surgical instrument to remove a circular section of bone.

unreasonable, although quite conscious. All of which meant that he required constant watching and was a perfect nuisance. He was so different from the other patients, who wanted to live. It was a joy to nurse them. This was the *Salle*[8] of the *Grands Blessés*, those most seriously wounded. By expert surgery, by expert nursing, some of these were to be returned to their homes again, *réformés*,[9] mutilated for life, a burden to themselves and to society; others were to be nursed back to health, to a point at which they could again shoulder eighty pounds of marching kit, and be torn to pieces again on the firing line. It was a pleasure to nurse such as these. It called forth all one's skill, all one's humanity. But to nurse back to health a man who was to be court-martialled and shot, truly that seemed a dead-end occupation.

They dressed his wounds every day. Very many yards of gauze were required, with gauze at so many francs a bolt. Very much ether, very much iodoform,[10] very many bandages—it was an expensive business, considering. All this waste for a man who was to be shot, as soon as he was well enough. How much better to expend this upon the hopeless cripples, or those who were to face death again in the trenches.

The night nurse was given to reflection. One night, about midnight, she took her candle and went down the ward, reflecting. Ten beds on the right hand side, ten beds on the left hand side, all full. How pitiful they were, these little soldiers, asleep. How irritating they were, these little soldiers, awake. Yet how sternly they contrasted with the man who had attempted suicide. Yet did they contrast, after all? Were they finer, nobler, than he? The night nurse, given to reflection, continued her rounds.

In bed number two, on the right, lay Alexandre, asleep. He had received the *Médaille Militaire*[11] for bravery. He was better now, and that day had asked the *Médecin Major* for permission to smoke. The *Médecin Major* had refused, saying that it would disturb the other patients. Yet after the doctor had gone, Alexandre had produced a cigarette and lighted it, defying them all from behind his *Médaille Militaire*. The patient in the

8. Hospital ward.

9. *Réformés* were men discharged and declared physically unfit for further military service.

10. Used during the war as an antiseptic for wounds.

11. The highest military medal awarded to French soldiers for valor in combat.

next bed had become violently nauseated in consequence, yet Alexandre had smoked on, secure in his *Médaille Militaire*. How much honour lay in that?

Here lay Félix, asleep. Poor, querulous, feeble-minded Félix, with a foul fistula, which filled the whole ward with its odour. In one sleeping hand lay his little round mirror, in the other, he clutched his comb. With daylight, he would trim and comb his moustache, his poor, little drooping moustache, and twirl the ends of it.

Beyond lay Alphonse, drugged with morphia, after an intolerable day. That morning he had received a package from home, a dozen pears. He had eaten them all, one after the other, though his companions in the beds adjacent looked on with hungry, longing eyes. He offered not one, to either side of him. After his gorge, he had become violently ill, and demanded the basin in which to unload his surcharged stomach.

Here lay Hippolyte, who for eight months had jerked on the bar of a captive balloon,[12] until appendicitis had sent him into hospital. He was not ill, and his dirty jokes filled the ward, provoking laughter, even from dying Marius. How filthy had been his jokes—how they had been matched and beaten by the jokes of others. How filthy they all were, when they talked with each other, shouting down the length of the ward.

Wherein lay the difference? Was it not all a dead-end occupation, nursing back to health men to be patched up and returned to the trenches, or a man to be patched up, court-martialled and shot? The difference lay in the Ideal.

One had no ideals. The others had ideals, and fought for them. Yet had they? Poor selfish Alexandre, poor vain Félix, poor gluttonous Alphonse, poor filthy Hippolyte—was it possible that each cherished ideals, hidden beneath? Courageous dreams of freedom and patriotism? Yet if so, how could such beliefs fail to influence their daily lives? Could one cherish standards so noble, yet be himself so ignoble, so petty, so commonplace?

At this point her candle burned out, so the night nurse took another one, and passed from bed to bed. It was very incomprehensible. Poor, whining

12. Manned observation balloons, tied to the ground, were used to monitor the enemy.

Félix, poor whining Alphonse, poor whining Hippolyte, poor whining Alexandre—all fighting for *La Patrie*.[13] And against them the man who had tried to desert *La Patrie*.

So the night nurse continued her rounds, up and down the ward, reflecting. And suddenly she saw that these ideals were imposed from without—that they were compulsory. That left to themselves, Félix, and Hippolyte, and Alexandre, and Alphonse would have had no ideals. Somewhere, higher up, a handful of men had been able to impose upon Alphonse, and Hippolyte, and Félix, and Alexandre, and thousands like them, a state of mind which was not in them, of themselves. Base metal, gilded. And they were all harnessed to a great car, a Juggernaut, ponderous and crushing, upon which was enthroned Mammon, or the Goddess of Liberty, or Reason, as you like. Nothing further was demanded of them than their collective physical strength—just to tug the car forward, to cut a wide swath, to leave behind a broad path along which could follow, at some later date, the hordes of Progress and Civilization. Individual nobility was superfluous. All the Idealists demanded was physical endurance from the mass.

Dawn filtered in through the little square windows of the ward. Two of the patients rolled on their sides, that they might talk to one another. In the silence of early morning their voices rang clear.

"Dost thou know, *mon ami*,[14] that when we captured that German battery a few days ago, we found the gunners chained to their guns?"

Paris,
18 December, 1915

13. The French nation.
14. My friend.

La Patrie Reconnaissante

They brought him to the *Poste de Secours*,[1] just behind the lines, and laid the stretcher down gently, after which the bearers stretched and re-stretched their stiffened arms, numb with his weight. For he was a big man of forty, not one of the light striplings of the young classes of this year or last. The wounded man opened his eyes, flashing black eyes, that roved about restlessly for a moment, and then rested vindictively first on one, then on the other of the two *brancardiers*.[2]

"*Sales embusqués!*" (Dirty cowards) he cried angrily. "How long is it since I have been wounded? Ten hours! For ten hours have I laid there, waiting for you! And then you come to fetch me, only when it is safe! Safe for you! Safe to risk your precious, filthy skins! Safe to come where I have stood for months! Safe to come where for ten hours I have laid, my belly opened by a German shell! Safe! Safe! How brave you are when night has fallen, when it is dark, when it is safe to come for me, ten hours late!"

He closed his eyes, jerked up his knees, and clasped both dirty hands over his abdomen. From waist to knees the old blue trousers were soaked with blood, black blood, stiff and wet. The *brancardiers* looked at each other and shook their heads. One shrugged a shoulder. Again the flashing eyes of the man on the stretcher opened.

"*Sales embusqués!*" he shouted again. "How long have you been engaged in this work of mercy? For twelve months, since the beginning of the war! And for twelve months, since the beginning of the war, I have stood in the

The title of this story means "The Grateful Nation." La Motte is alluding to the inscription above the entrance to the Panthéon in Paris, which reads, "*Aux grands hommes la patrie reconnaissante*" (To great men, the grateful nation).

1. First-aid post.
2. Stretcher bearers.

first line trenches! Think of it—twelve months! And for twelve months you have come for us—when it was safe! How much younger are you than I! Ten years, both of you—ten years, fifteen years, or even more! Ah, *Nom de Dieu*,[3] to have influence! Influence!"

The flaming eyes closed again, and the bearers shuffled off, lighting cheap cigarettes.

Then the surgeon came, impatiently. Ah, a *grand blessé*,[4] to be hastened to the rear at once. The surgeon tried to unbutton the soaking trousers, but the man gave a scream of pain.

"For the sake of God, cut them, *Monsieur le Major!*[5] Cut them! Do not economize. They are worn out in the service of the country! They are torn and bloody, they can serve no one after me! Ah, the little economies, the little, false economies! Cut them, *Monsieur le Major!*"

An assistant, with heavy, blunt scissors, half cut, half tore the trousers from the man in agony. Clouts[6] of black blood rolled from the wound, then a stream bright and scarlet, which was stopped by a handful of white gauze, retained by tightly wrapped bands. The surgeon raised himself from the task.

"*Mon pauvre vieux*,"[7] he murmured tenderly. "Once more?" and into the supine leg he shot a stream of morphia.

Two ambulance men came in, Americans in khaki, ruddy, well fed, careless.[8] They lifted the stretcher quickly, skilfully. Marius opened his angry eyes and fixed them furiously.

"*Sales étrangers!*"[9] he screamed. "What are *you* here for? To see me, with my bowels running on the ground? Did you come for me ten hours ago, when I needed you? My head in mud, my blood warm under me? Ah, not you! There was danger then—you only come for me when it is safe!"

They shoved him into the ambulance, buckling down the brown canvas curtains by the light of a lantern. One cranked the motor, then both

3. God damn it!
4. Seriously wounded patient.
5. Mister Major.
6. An archaic spelling of clots.
7. My poor old fellow.
8. At this point in the war, all American ambulancemen were volunteers.
9. Dirty foreigners!

clambered to the seat in front, laughing. They drove swiftly but carefully through the darkness, carrying no lights. Inside, the man continued his imprecations, but they could not hear him.

"Strangers! Sightseers!" he sobbed in misery. "Driving a motor, when it is I who should drive the motor! Have I not conducted a Paris taxi for these past ten years? Do I not know how to drive, to manage an engine? What are they here for—France? No, only themselves! To write a book—to say what they have done—when it was safe![10] If it was France, there is the Foreign Legion—where they would have been welcome—to stand in the trenches as I have done! But do they enlist?[11] Ah no! It is not safe! They take my place with the motor, and come to get me—when it is too late."

Then the morphia relieving him, he slept.

In a field hospital, some ten kilometres behind the lines, Marius lay dying. For three days he had been dying and it was disturbing to the other patients. The stench of his wounds filled the air, his curses filled the ward. For Marius knew that he was dying and that he had nothing to fear. He could express himself as he chose. There would be no earthly court-martial for him—he was answerable to a higher court. So Marius gave forth freely to the ward his philosophy of life, his hard, bare, ugly life, as he had lived it, and his comments on *La Patrie* as he understood it. For three days, night and day, he screamed in his delirium, and no one paid much attention, thinking it was delirium. The other patients were sometimes diverted and amused, sometimes exceedingly annoyed, according to whether or not they were sleepy or suffering. And all the while the wound in the abdomen gave forth a terrible stench, filling the ward, for he had gas gangrene,[12] the odour of which is abominable.

10. A number of American ambulance drivers eventually wrote about their experiences, including Ernest Hemingway, John Dos Passos, and E. E. Cummings, as well as lesser-known writers, such as Leslie Buswell, author of *Ambulance No. 10*.

11. One American who did enlist in the French Foreign Legion was the poet Alan Seeger, who wrote the famous lines of "I Have a Rendezvous with Death" before he died on July 4, 1916, during the Battle of the Somme.

12. A deadly bacterial infection.

Marius had been taken to the *Salle* of the abdominal wounds, and on one side of him lay a man with a fæcal fistula,[13] which smelled atrociously. The man with the fistula, however, had got used to himself, so he complained mightily of Marius. On the other side lay a man who had been shot through the bladder, and the smell of urine was heavy in the air round about. Yet this man had also got used to himself, and he too complained of Marius, and the awful smell of Marius. For Marius had gas gangrene, and gangrene is death, and it was the smell of death that the others complained of.

Two beds farther down, lay a boy of twenty, who had been shot through the liver. Also his hand had been amputated, and for this reason he was to receive the *Croix de Guerre*.[14] He had performed no special act of bravery, but all *mutilés*[15] are given the *Croix de Guerre*, for they will recover and go back to Paris, and in walking about the streets of Paris, with one leg gone, or an arm gone, it is good for the *morale* of the country that they should have a *Croix de Guerre* pinned on their breasts. So one night at about eight o'clock, the General arrived to confer the *Croix de Guerre* on the man two beds from Marius. The General was a beautiful man, something like the Russian Grand Duke. He was tall and thin, with beautiful slim legs encased in shining tall boots. As he entered the ward, emerging from the rain and darkness without, he was very imposing. A few rain drops sparkled upon the golden oak leaves[16] of his cap, for although he had driven up in a limousine, he was not able to come quite up to the ward, but had been obliged to traverse some fifty yards of darkness, in the rain. He was encircled in a sweeping black cloak, which he cast off upon an empty bed, and then, surrounded by his glittering staff, he conferred the medal upon the man two beds below Marius. The little ceremony was touching in its dignity and simplicity. Marius, in his delirium, watched the proceedings intently.

It was all over in five minutes. Then the General was gone, his staff was gone, and the ward was left to its own reflections.

13. A leaking opening between the bowels and the skin.

14. A French medal, the War Cross, created in 1915 to recognize acts of bravery.

15. Disabled servicemen.

16. The insignia of a general.

Opposite Marius, across the ward, lay a little *joyeux*.[17] That is to say, a soldier of the *Bataillon d'Afrique*,[18] which is the criminal regiment of France, in which regiment are placed those men who would otherwise serve sentences in jail. Prisoners are sent to this regiment in peace time, and in time of war, they fight in the trenches as do the others, but with small chance of being decorated. Social rehabilitation is their sole reward, as a rule. So Marius waxed forth, taunting the little *joyeux*, whose feet lay opposite his feet, a yard apart.

"*Tiens!*[19] My little friend!" he shouted so that all might hear. "Thou canst never receive the *Croix de Guerre*, as François has received it, because thou art of the *Bataillon d'Afrique!* And why art thou there, my friend? Because, one night at a café, thou didst drink more wine than was good for thee—so much more than was good for thee, that when an old *boulevardier*,[20] with much money in his pocket, proposed to take thy girl from thee, thou didst knock him down and give him a black eye! Common brawler, disturber of the peace! It was all due to the wine, the good wine, which made thee value the girl far above her worth! It was the wine! The wine! And every time an attempt is made in the Chamber to abolish drinking the good wine of France, there is violent opposition. Opposition from whom? From the old *boulevardier* whose money is invested in the vineyards—the very man who casts covetous eyes upon thy Mimi![21] So thou goest to jail, then to the *Bataillon d'Afrique*, and the wine flows, and thy Mimi—where is she? Only never canst thou receive the *Croix de Guerre*, my friend—*La Patrie Reconnaissante*[22] sees to that!"

Marius shouted with laughter—he knew himself so near death, and it was good to be able to say all that was in his heart. An orderly approached him, one of the six young men attached as male nurses to the ward.

17. A joyous one. An ironic nickname for men serving in the harsh Bataillon d'Afrique.

18. An abridged name for the Bataillons d'Infanterie Légère d'Afrique (Battalions of Light Infantry of Africa), which historically served in northern Africa and consisted of French criminals.

19. Listen!

20. Fashionable man.

21. A likely allusion to Mimi from Giacomo Puccini's opera *La Bohème*.

22. The grateful nation.

"Ha! Thou bidst me be quiet, *sale embusqué?*" he taunted. "I will shout louder than the guns! And hast thou ever heard the guns, nearer than this safe point behind the lines? Thou art here doing woman's work! Caring for me, nursing me! And what knowledge dost thou bring to thy task, thou ignorant grocer's clerk? Surely thou hast some powerful friend, who got thee mobilized as *infirmier*[23]—a woman's task—instead of a simple soldier like me, doing his duty in the trenches!"

Marius raised himself in bed, which the *infirmier* knew, because the doctor had told him, was not a right position for a man who has a wound in his stomach, some thirty centimetres in length. Marius, however, was strong in his delirium, so the *infirmier* called another to help him throw the patient upon his back. Soon three were called, to hold the struggling man down.

Marius resigned himself. "Summon all six of you!" he shouted. "All six of you! And what do you know about illness such as mine? You, a grocer's clerk! You, barber! You, *cultivateur!*[24] You, driver of the boat train from Paris to Cherbourg! You, agent of the Gas Society of Paris![25] You, driver of a Paris taxi, such as myself! Yet here you all are, in your wisdom, your experience, to nurse me! Mobilized as nurses because you are friend of a friend of a deputy! Whilst I, who know no deputy, am mobilized in the first line trenches! *Sales embusqués! Sales embusqués! La Patrie Reconnaissante!*"

He laid upon his back a little while, quiet. He was very delirious, and the end could not be far off. His black eyebrows were contracted into a frown, the eyelids closed and quivering. The grey nostrils were pinched and dilated, the grey lips snarling above yellow, crusted teeth. The restless lips twitched constantly, mumbling fresh treason, inaudibly. Upon the floor on one side lay a pile of coverlets, tossed angrily from the bed, while on each side [of] the bed dangled white, muscular, hairy legs, the toes touching the floor. All the while he fumbled to unloose the abdominal dressings, picking at the safety-pins with weak, dirty fingers. The patients on each side turned their backs to him, to escape the smell, the smell of death.

23. A male nurse, who functioned as an orderly.

24. Farmer.

25. La Société du Gaz de Paris, a gas utility company.

A woman nurse came down the ward. She was the only one, and she tried to cover him with the fallen bedding. Marius attempted to clutch her hand, to encircle her with his weak, delirious, amorous arms. She dodged swiftly, and directed an orderly to cover him with the fallen blankets.

Marius laughed in glee, a fiendish, feeble, shrieking laugh. "Have nothing to do with a woman who is diseased!" he shouted. "Never! Never! Never!"

So they gave him more morphia, that he might be quiet and less indecent, and not disturb the other patients. And all that night he died, and all the next day he died, and all the night following he died, for he was a very strong man and his vitality was wonderful. And as he died, he continued to pour out to them his experience of life, his summing up of life, as he had lived it and known it. And the sight of the woman nurse evoked one train of thought, and the sight of the men nurses evoked another, and the sight of the man who had the *Croix de Guerre* evoked another, and the sight of the *joyeux* evoked another. And he told the ward all about it, incessantly. He was very delirious.

His was a filthy death. He died after three days' cursing and raving. Before he died, that end of the ward smelled foully, and his foul words, shouted at the top of his delirious voice, echoed foully. Everyone was glad when it was over.

The end came suddenly. After very much raving it came, after terrible abuse, terrible truths. One morning, very early, the night nurse looked out of the window and saw a little procession making its way out of the gates of the hospital enclosure, going towards the cemetery of the village beyond. First came the priest, carrying a wooden cross that the carpenter had just made. He was chanting something in a minor key, while the sentry at the gates stood at salute. The cortège[26] passed through, numbering a dozen soldiers, four of whom carried the bier on their shoulders. The bier was covered with the glorious tricolour[27] of France. She glanced instinctively back towards Marius. It would be just like that when he died. Then her eyes fell upon a Paris newspaper, lying on her table. There was a column headed,

26. Funeral procession.

27. Flag.

"*Nos Héros! Morts aux Champs d'Honneur! La Patrie Reconnaissante*."[28] It would be just like that.

Then Marius gave a last, sudden scream.

"*Vive la France!*"[29] he shouted. "*Vive les sales embusqués! Hoch le Kaiser!*"[30]

The ward awoke, scandalized.

"*Vive la Patrie Reconnaissante!*"[31] he yelled. "*Hoch le Kaiser!*"

Then he died.

Paris,
19 December, 1915

28. Our Heroes! Killed on the Field of Honor! The Grateful Nation!
29. Long live France!
30. Long live the dirty cowards! Hail the Kaiser!
31. Long live the Grateful Nation!

The Hole in the Hedge

The field hospital stood in a field outside the village, surrounded by a thick, high hedge of prickly material. Within, the enclosure was filled by a dozen little wooden huts, painted green, connected with each other by plank walks. What went on outside the hedge, nobody within knew. War, presumably. War ten kilometres away, to judge by the map, and by the noise of the guns, which on some days roared very loudly, and made the wooden huts shake and tremble, although one got used to that, after a fashion. The hospital was very close to the war, so close that no one knew anything about the war, therefore it was very dull inside the enclosure, with no news and no newspapers, and just quarrels and monotonous work. As for the hedge, at such points as the prickly thorn gave out or gave way, stout stakes and stout boarding took its place, thus making it a veritable prison wall to those confined within. There was but one recognized entrance, the big double gates with a sentry box beside them, at which box or within it, according to the weather, stood a sentry, night and day. By day, a drooping French flag over the gates showed the ambulances where to enter. By night, a lantern served the same purpose. The night sentry was often asleep, the day sentry was often absent, and each wrote down in a book, when they thought it important, the names of those who came and went into the hospital grounds. The field ambulances came and went, the hospital motors came and went, now and then the General's car came and went, and the people attached to the hospital also came and went, openly, through the gates. But the comings and goings through the hedge were different.

Now and then holes were discovered in the hedge. Holes underneath the prickly thorn, not more than a foot high, but sufficient to allow a crawling body to wriggle through on its stomach. These holes persisted for a day or two or three, and then were suddenly staked up, with strong stakes and

barbed wire. After which, a few days later, perhaps, other holes like them would be discovered in the hedge a little further along. After each hole was discovered, curious happenings would take place amongst the hospital staff.

Certain men, orderlies or stretcher bearers, would be imprisoned. For example, the nurse of *Salle I.*, the ward of the *grands blessés*, would come on duty some morning and discover that one of her orderlies was missing. Fouquet, who swept the ward, who carried basins, who gave the men their breakfasts, was absent. There was a beastly hitch in the ward work, in consequence. The floor was filthy, covered with cakes of mud tramped in by the stretcher bearers during the night. The men screamed for attention they did not receive. The wrong patients got the wrong food at meal times. And then the nurse would look out of one of the little square windows of the ward, and see Fouquet marching up and down the plank walks between the *baracques*,[1] carrying his eighty pounds of marching kit, and smiling happily and defiantly. He was "in prison." The night before he had crawled through a hole in the hedge, got blind drunk in a neighbouring *estaminet*,[2] and had swaggered boldly through the gates in the morning, to be "imprisoned." He wanted to be. He just could not stand it any longer. He was sick of it all. Sick of being *infirmier*, of sweeping the floor, of carrying vessels, of cutting up tough meat for sullen, one-armed men, with the *Croix de Guerre* pinned to their coffee-streaked night shirts. Bah! The *Croix de Guerre* pinned to a night shirt, egg-stained, smelling of sweat!

Long, long ago, before any one thought of war—oh, long ago, that is, about six years—Fouquet had known a deputy. Also his father had known the deputy. And so, when it came time for his military service, he had done it as *infirmier*. As nurse, not soldier. He had done stretcher drill, with empty stretchers. He had swept wards, empty of patients. He had done his two years [of] military service, practising on empty beds, on empty stretchers. He had had a snap, because of the deputy. Then came the war, and still he had a snap, although now the beds and the wards were all full. Still, there was no danger, no front line trenches, for he was mobilized as [an] *infirmier*, as [a] nurse in a military hospital.[3] He stood six feet tall, which is big

1. Wooden huts.
2. Tavern.
3. Male nurses functioned as orderlies.

for a Frenchman, and he was big in proportion, and he was twenty-five years old, and ruddy and strong. Yet he was obliged to wait upon a little screaming man, five feet two, whose nose had been shot away, exchanged for the *Médaille Militaire* upon his breast, who screamed out to him: "Bring me the basin, *embusqué!*" And he had brought it. If he had not brought it, the little screaming man with no nose and the flat bandage across his face would have reported him to the *Médecin Chef*,[4] and in time he might have been transferred to the front line trenches. Anything is better than the front line trenches. Fouquet knew this, because the wounded men were so bitter at his not being there. The old men were very bitter. At the end of the summer, they changed the troops in this sector, and the young Zouaves[5] were replaced by old men of forty and forty-five. They looked very much older than this when they were wounded and brought into the hospital, for their hair and beards were often quite white, and besides their wounds, they were often sick from exposure to the cold, winter rains of Flanders.[6] One of these old men, who were nearly always querulous, had a son also serving in the trenches. He was very rude to Fouquet, this old man. Old and young, they called him *embusqué*. Which meant that they were jealous of him, that they very much envied him for escaping the trenches, and considered it very unjust that they knew no one with influence who could have protected them in the same way. But Fouquet was very sick of it all. Day in and day out, for eighteen months, or since the beginning of the war, he had waited upon the wounded. He had done as the commonest soldier had ordered him, clodding up and down the ward in his heavy wooden *sabots*,[7] knocking them against the beds, eliciting curses for his intentional clumsiness. There were also many priests in that hospital, likewise serving as *infirmiers*. They too, fetched and carried, but they did not seem to resent it. Only Fouquet and some others resented it. Fouquet resented the war, and the first line trenches, and the field hospital, and the wounded men, and everything connected with the war. He was utterly bored with the war. The hole in the hedge and the *estaminet* beyond was all that saved him.

4. Chief doctor.
5. Infantrymen.
6. Region of Belgium in which the hospital and nearby trenches were located.
7. Clogs.

There was a priest with a yellow beard, who also used the hole in the hedge. He used it almost every night, when it was open. He slipped out, got his drink, and then slipped down to the village to spend the night with a girl. Only he was crafty, and slipped back again through the hole before daylight, and was always on duty again in the morning. True, he was very cross and irritable, and the patients did without things rather than ask him for them, and sometimes they suffered a great deal, doing without things, on these mornings when he was so cross.

But with Fouquet, it was different. He walked in boldly through the gates in the morning, and said that he had been out all night without leave, and that he was bored to the point of death. So the *Médecin Chef* punished him. He imprisoned him, and as there was no prison, he served his six days' sentence in the open air. He donned his eighty pounds of marching kit, and tramped up and down the plank walks, and round behind the *baracques*, in the mud, in full sight of all, so that all might witness his humiliation. He did not go on duty again in the ward, and in consequence, the ward suffered through lack of his grudging, uncouth administration.

Sometimes he met the *Directrice* as he trudged up and down. He was always afraid to meet her, because once she had gone to the *Médecin Chef* and had him pardoned. Her gentle heart had been touched at the sight of his public disgrace, so she had had his sentence remitted, and he had been obliged to go back to the ward, to the work he loathed, to the patients he despised, after only two hours' freedom in a rare October sun. Since then, he had carefully avoided the *Directrice* when he saw her blue cloak in the distance, coming down the *trottoir*.[8] Women were a nuisance at the Front.

He frequently encountered the man who picked up papers, and frankly envied him, for this man had a very easy post. He was mobilized as a member of the *formation* of Hospital Number——, and his work consisted in picking up scraps of paper scattered about the grounds within the enclosure. He had a long stick with a nail in the end, and a small basket because there wasn't much to pick up. With the nail, he picked up what scraps there were, and did not even have to stoop over to do it. He walked about in the clean, fresh air, and when it rained, he cuddled up against the stove in the pharmacy. The present paper-gatherer was a chemist; his predecessor

8. Planked walkway.

had been a priest. It was a very nice position for an able-bodied man with some education, and Fouquet greatly desired it himself, only he feared he was not sufficiently well educated, since in civil life he was only a farm hand. So in his march up and down the *trottoir* he cast envious glances at the man who picked up papers.

So, bearing his full-weight marching kit, he walked up and down, between the *baracques*, dogged and defiant. The other orderlies and stretcher bearers laughed at him, and said: "There goes Fouquet, punished!" And the patients, who missed him, asked: "Where is Fouquet? Punished?" And the nurse of that ward, who also missed Fouquet, said: "Poor Fouquet! Punished!" But Fouquet, swaggering up and down in full sight of all, was pleased because he had had a good drink the night before, and did not have to wait upon the patients the day after, and to him, the only sane thing about the war was the discipline of the Army.

Alone

Rochard died to-day. He had gas gangrene. His thigh, from knee to buttock, was torn out by a piece of German shell. It was an interesting case, because the infection had developed so quickly. He had been placed under treatment immediately too, reaching the hospital from the trenches about six hours after he had been wounded. To have a thigh torn off, and to reach first-class surgical care within six hours, is practically immediately. Still, gas gangrene had developed, which showed that the Germans were using very poisonous shells.[1] At that field hospital there had been established a surgical school, to which young men, just graduated from medical schools, or old men, graduated long ago from medical schools, were sent to learn how to take care of the wounded. After they had received a two months' experience in this sort of war surgery, they were to be placed in other hospitals, where they could do the work themselves. So all those young men who did not know much, and all those old men who had never known much, and had forgotten most of that, were up here at this field hospital, learning. This had to be done, because there were not enough good doctors to go round, so in order to care for the wounded at all, it was necessary to furbish up the immature and the senile. However, the *Médecin Chef* in charge of the hospital and in charge of the surgical school, was a brilliant surgeon and a good administrator, so he taught the students a good deal. Therefore, when Rochard came into the operating room, all the young students and the old students crowded round to see the case. It was all torn away, the flesh from that right thigh, from knee to buttock, down to the bone, and the stench was awful. The various students came forward and timidly pressed the

1. Actually, bacteria in the soil of the trenches and battlefields led to gas gangrene in contaminated wounds.

upper part of the thigh, the remaining part, all that remained of it, with their fingers, and little crackling noises came forth, like bubbles. Gas gangrene. Very easy to diagnose. Also the bacteriologist from another hospital in the region happened to be present, and he made a culture of the material discharged from that wound, and afterwards told the *Médecin Chef* that it was positively and absolutely gas gangrene. But the *Médecin Chef* had already taught the students that gas gangrene may be recognized by the crackling and the smell, and the fact that the patient, as a rule, dies pretty soon.

They could not operate on Rochard and amputate his leg, as they wanted to do. The infection was so high, into the hip, it could not be done. Moreover, Rochard had a fractured skull as well. Another piece of shell had pierced his ear, and broken into his brain, and lodged there. Either wound would have been fatal, but it was the gas gangrene in his torn-out thigh that would kill him first. The wound stank. It was foul. The *Médecin Chef* took a curette, a little scoop, and scooped away the dead flesh, the dead muscles, the dead nerves, the dead blood-vessels. And so many blood-vessels being dead, being scooped away by that sharp curette, how could the blood circulate in the top half of that flaccid thigh? It couldn't. Afterwards, into the deep, yawning wound, they put many compresses of gauze, soaked in carbolic acid, which acid burned deep into the germs of the gas gangrene, and killed them, and killed much good tissue besides. Then they covered the burning, smoking gauze with absorbent cotton, then with clean, neat bandages, after which they called the stretcher bearers, and Rochard was carried from the operating table back to the ward.

The night nurse reported next morning that he had passed a night of agony.

"*Cela pique! Cela brule!*"[2] he cried all night, and turned from side to side to find relief. Sometimes he lay on his good side; sometimes he lay on his bad side, and the night nurse turned him from side to side, according to his fancy, because she knew that on neither one side nor the other would he find relief, except such mental relief as he got by turning. She sent one of the orderlies, Fouquet, for the *Médecin Chef*, and the *Médecin Chef* came to the ward, and looked at Rochard, and ordered the night nurse to give him morphia, and again morphia, as often as she thought best. For only death

2. It stings! It burns!

could bring relief from such pain as that, and only morphia, a little in advance of death, could bring partial relief.

So the night nurse took care of Rochard all that night, and turned him and turned him, from one side to the other, and gave him morphia, as the *Médecin Chef* had ordered. She listened to his cries all night, for the morphia brought him no relief. Morphia gives a little relief, at times, from the pain of life, but it is only death that brings absolute relief.

When the day nurse came on duty next morning, there was Rochard in agony. "*Cela pique! Cela brule!*" he cried. And again and again, all the time, "*Cela pique! Cela brule!*," meaning the pain in his leg. And because of the piece of shell, which had penetrated his ear and lodged in his brain somewhere, his wits were wandering. No one can be fully conscious with an inch of German shell in his skull. And there was a full inch of German shell in Rochard's skull, in his brain somewhere, for the radiographist[3] said so. He was a wonderful radiographist and anatomist, and he worked accurately with a beautiful, expensive machine, given him, or given the field hospital, by Madame Curie.[4]

So all night Rochard screamed in agony, and turned and twisted, first on the hip that was there, and then on the hip that was gone, and on neither side, even with many ampoules of morphia, could he find relief. Which shows that morphia, good as it is, is not as good as death. So when the day nurse came on in the morning, there was Rochard strong after a night of agony, strong after many *picqures*[5] of strychnia,[6] which kept his heart beating and his lungs breathing, strong after many *picqures* of morphia which did not relieve his pain. Thus the science of healing stood baffled before the science of destroying.

Rochard died slowly. He stopped struggling. He gave up trying to find relief by lying upon the hip that was there, or the hip that was gone. He ceased to cry. His brain, in which was lodged a piece of German shell, seemed to reason, to become reasonable, with break of day. The evening before, after his return from the operating room, he had been decorated

3. Radiologist, using an early X-ray machine.

4. Madame Curie was twice awarded the Nobel Prize for her pioneering work in the field of radioactivity. La Motte may have met her in Paris before the war.

5. Injections.

6. A drug formerly used as a stimulant for the central nervous system.

with the *Médaille Militaire*, conferred upon him, *in extremis*, by the General of the region. Upon one side of the medal, which was pinned to the wall at the head of the bed, were the words: *Valeur et Discipline*.[7] Discipline had triumphed. He was very good and quiet now, very obedient and disciplined, and no longer disturbed the ward with his moanings.

Little Rochard! Little man, gardener by trade, aged thirty-nine, widower, with one child! The piece of shell in his skull had made one eye blind. There had been a hæmorrhage into the eyeball, which was all red and sunken, and the eyelid would not close over it, so the red eye stared and stared into space. And the other eye drooped and drooped, and the white showed, and the eyelid drooped till nothing but the white showed, and that showed that he was dying. But the blind, red eye stared beyond. It stared fixedly, unwinkingly, into space. So always the nurse watched the dull, white eye, which showed the approach of death.

No one in the ward was fond of Rochard. He had been there only a few hours. He meant nothing to any one there. He was a dying man, in a field hospital, that was all. Little stranger Rochard, with one blind, red eye that stared into Hell, the Hell he had come from. And one white, dying eye, that showed his hold on life, his brief, short hold. The nurse cared for him very gently, very conscientiously, very skilfully. The surgeon came many times to look at him, but he had done for him all that could be done, so each time he turned away with a shrug. Fouquet, the young orderly, stood at the foot of the bed, his feet far apart, his hands on his hips, and regarded Rochard, and said: "*Ah! La la! La la!*" And Simon, the other orderly, also stood at the foot of the bed, from time to time, and regarded Rochard, and said: "*Ah! C'est triste! C'est bien triste!*"[8]

So Rochard died, a stranger among strangers. And there were many people there to wait upon him, but there was no one there to love him. There was no one there to see beyond the horror of the red, blind eye, of the dull, white eye, of the vile, gangrene smell. And it seemed as if the red, staring eye was looking for something the hospital could not give. And it seemed as if the white, glazed eye was indifferent to everything the hospital could give. And all about him was the vile gangrene smell, which made an aura

7. Valor and Discipline.

8. Oh! It is sad! It is quite sad!

about him, and shut him into himself, very completely. And there was nobody to love him, to forget about that smell.

He sank into a stupor about ten o'clock in the morning, and was unconscious from then till the time the nurse went to lunch. She went to lunch reluctantly, but it is necessary to eat. She instructed Fouquet, the orderly, to watch Rochard carefully, and to call her if there was any change.

After a short time she came back from lunch, and hurried to see Rochard, hurried behind the flamboyant, red, cheerful screens that shut him off from the rest of the ward. Rochard was dead.

At the other end of the ward sat the two orderlies, drinking wine.

Paris,
April 15, 1915[9]

9. This date is clearly a mistake. La Motte did not arrive at the field hospital until summer 1915, when it first opened. The actual date of the story's completion is likely April 15, 1916.

A Belgian Civilian

A big English ambulance drove along the high road from Ypres, going in the direction of a French field hospital, some ten miles from Ypres.[1] Ordinarily, it could have had no business with this French hospital, since all English wounded are conveyed back to their own bases, therefore an exceptional case must have determined its route. It was an exceptional case—for the patient lying quietly within its yawning body, sheltered by its brown canvas wings, was not an English soldier, but only a small Belgian boy, a civilian, and Belgian civilians belong neither to the French nor English services. It is true that there was a hospital for Belgian civilians at the English base at Hazebrouck, and it would have seemed reasonable to have taken the patient there, but it was more reasonable to dump him at this French hospital, which was nearer. Not from any humanitarian motives, but just to get rid of him the sooner. In war, civilians are cheap things at best, and an immature civilian, Belgian at that, is very cheap. So the heavy English ambulance churned its way up a muddy hill, mashed through much mud at the entrance gates of the hospital, and crunched to a halt on the cinders before the *Salle d'Attente*,[2] where it discharged its burden and drove off again.

The surgeon of the French hospital said: "What have we to do with this?" yet he regarded the patient thoughtfully. It was a very small patient. Moreover, the big English ambulance had driven off again, so there was no appeal. The small patient had been deposited upon one of the beds in the *Salle d'Attente*, and the French surgeon looked at him and wondered what he should do. The patient, now that he was here, belonged as much

1. The strategically positioned Belgian town of Ypres was the site of three major battles during World War I.

2. Waiting room.

to the French field hospital as to any other, and as the big English ambulance from Ypres had driven off again, there was not much use in protesting. The French surgeon was annoyed and irritated. It was a characteristic English trick, he thought, this getting other people to do their work. Why could they not have taken the child to one of their own hospitals, since he had been wounded in their lines,[3] or else have taken him to the hospital provided for Belgian civilians, where, full as it was, there was always room for people as small as this. The surgeon worked himself up into quite a temper. There is one thing about members of the *Entente*[4]—they understand each other. The French surgeon's thoughts travelled round and round in an irritated circle, and always came back to the fact that the English ambulance had gone, and here lay the patient, and something must be done. So he stood considering.

A Belgian civilian, aged ten. Or thereabouts. Shot through the abdomen, or thereabouts. And dying, obviously. As usual, the surgeon pulled and twisted the long, black hairs on his hairy, bare arms, while he considered what he should do. He considered for five minutes, and then ordered the child to the operating room, and scrubbed and scrubbed his hands and his hairy arms, preparatory to a major operation. For the Belgian civilian, aged ten, had been shot through the abdomen by a German shell, or piece of shell, and there was nothing to do but try to remove it. It was a hopeless case, anyhow. The child would die without an operation, or he would die during the operation, or he would die after the operation. The French surgeon scrubbed his hands viciously, for he was still greatly incensed over the English authorities who had placed the case in his hands and then gone away again. They should have taken him to one of the English bases, St. Omer, or Hazebrouck—it was an imposition to have dumped him so unceremoniously here simply because "here" was so many kilometres nearer. "Shirking," the surgeon called it, and was much incensed.

After a most searching operation, the Belgian civilian was sent over to the ward, to live or die as circumstances determined. As soon as he came out of ether, he began to bawl for his mother. Being ten years of age, he was

3. Ypres was in the British sector of the battlefield.

4. The Triple Entente alliance—the French Republic, British Empire, and Russian Empire—fought against the Central Powers.

unreasonable, and bawled for her incessantly and could not be pacified. The patients were greatly annoyed by this disturbance, and there was indignation that the welfare and comfort of useful soldiers should be interfered with by the whims of a futile and useless civilian, a Belgian child at that. The nurse of that ward also made a fool of herself over this civilian, giving him far more attention than she had ever bestowed upon a soldier. She was sentimental, and his little age appealed to her—her sense of proportion and standard of values were all awrong. The *Directrice* appeared in the ward and tried to comfort the civilian, to still his howls, and then, after an hour of vain effort, she decided that his mother must be sent for. He was obviously dying, and it was necessary to send for his mother, whom alone of all the world he seemed to need. So a French ambulance, which had nothing to do with Belgian civilians, nor with Ypres, was sent over to Ypres late in the evening to fetch this mother for whom the Belgian civilian, aged ten, bawled so persistently.

She arrived finally, and, it appeared, reluctantly. About ten o'clock in the evening she arrived, and the moment she alighted from the big ambulance sent to fetch her, she began complaining. She had complained all the way over, said the chauffeur. She climbed down backward from the front seat, perched for a moment on the hub, while one heavy leg, with foot shod in slipping *sabot*, groped wildly for the ground. A soldier with a lantern watched impassively, watched her solid splash into a mud puddle that might have been avoided. So she continued her complaints. She had been dragged away from her husband, from her other children, and she seemed to have little interest in her son, the Belgian civilian, said to be dying. However, now that she was here, now that she had come all this way, she would go in to see him for a moment, since the *Directrice* seemed to think it so important. The *Directrice* of this French field hospital was an American, by marriage a British subject, and she had curious, antiquated ideas. She seemed to feel that a mother's place was with her child, if that child was dying. The *Directrice* had three children of her own whom she had left in England over a year ago, when she came out to Flanders for the life and adventures of the Front.[5] But she would have returned to England immediately, without an instant's

5. Mary Borden, the hospital's director, had a husband and three young daughters living in England.

hesitation, had she received word that one of these children was dying. Which was a point of view opposed to that of this Belgian mother, who seemed to feel that her place was back in Ypres, in her home, with her husband and other children. In fact, this Belgian mother had been rudely dragged away from her home, from her family, from certain duties that she seemed to think important. So she complained bitterly, and went into the ward most reluctantly, to see her son, said to be dying.

She saw her son, and kissed him, and then asked to be sent back to Ypres. The *Directrice* explained that the child would not live through the night. The Belgian mother accepted this statement, but again asked to be sent back to Ypres. The *Directrice* again assured the Belgian mother that her son would not live through the night, and asked her to spend the night with him in the ward, to assist at his passing. The Belgian woman protested.

"If *Madame la Directrice* commands, if she insists, then I must assuredly obey. I have come all this distance because she commanded me, and if she insists that I spend the night at this place, then I must do so. Only if she does not insist, then I prefer to return to my home, to my other children at Ypres."

However, the *Directrice*, who had a strong sense of a mother's duty to the dying, commanded and insisted, and the Belgian woman gave way. She sat by her son all night, listening to his ravings and bawlings, and was with him when he died, at three o'clock in the morning. After which time, she requested to be taken back to Ypres. She was moved by the death of her son, but her duty lay at home. *Madame la Directrice* had promised to have a mass said at the burial of the child, which promise having been given, the woman saw no necessity for remaining.

"My husband," she explained, "has a little *estaminet*, just outside of Ypres. We have been very fortunate. Only yesterday, of all the long days of the war, of the many days of bombardment, did a shell fall into our kitchen, wounding our son, as you have seen. But we have other children to consider, to provide for. And my husband is making much money at present, selling drink to the English soldiers. I must return to assist him."

So the Belgian civilian was buried in the cemetery of the French soldiers, but many hours before this took place, the mother of the civilian had departed for Ypres. The chauffeur of the ambulance which was to convey her back to Ypres turned very white when given his orders. Everyone dreaded Ypres, and the dangers of Ypres. It was the place of death. Only the Belgian

woman, whose husband kept an *estaminet*, and made much money selling drink to the English soldiers, did not dread it. She and her husband were making much money out of the war, money which would give their children a start in life. When the ambulance was ready she climbed into it with alacrity, although with a feeling of gratitude because the *Directrice* had promised a mass for her dead child.

"These Belgians!" said a French soldier. "How prosperous they will be after the war! How much money they will make from the Americans, and from the others who come to see the ruins!"

And as an afterthought, in an undertone, he added: "*Ces sales Belges!*"[6]

6. These dirty Belgians.

The Interval

As an orderly, Erard wasn't much good.

He never waited upon the patients if he could help it, and when he couldn't help it, he was so disagreeable that they wished they had not asked him for things. The newcomers, who had been in the hospital only a few days, used to think he was deaf, since he failed to hear their requests, and they did not like to yell at him, out of consideration for their comrades in the adjoining beds. Nor was he a success at sweeping the ward, since he did it with the broom in one hand and a copy of the *Petit Parisien*[1] in the other—in fact, when he sat down on a bed away at the end and frankly gave himself up to a two-year-old copy of *Le Rire*,[2] sent out with a lot of old magazines for the patients, he was no less effective than when he sulkily worked. There was just one thing he liked and did well, and that was to watch for the Generals. He was an expert in recognizing them when they were as yet a long way off. He used to slouch against the window panes and keep a keen eye upon the *trottoir* on such days or at such hours as the Generals were likely to appear. Upon catching sight of the oak-leaves in the distance, he would at once notify the ward, so that the orderlies and the nurse could tidy up things before the General made rounds. He had a very keen eye for oak-leaves—the golden oak-leaves on the General's *képi*[3]—and he never by any chance gave a false alarm or mistook a colonel in the distance, and so put us to tidying up unnecessarily. He did not help with the work of course, but continued leaning against the window, reporting the General's progress up the *trottoir*—that he had now gone into Salle III.—that he

1. *Petit Parisien* (Little Parisian) was a prominent French newspaper.
2. *Le Rire* (Laughter) was a French humor magazine.
3. French military cap.

had left Salle III. and was conversing outside Salle II.—that he was now, positively, on his way up the incline leading into Salle I., and would be upon us any minute. Sometimes the General lingered unnecessarily long on the incline, the wooden slope leading up to the ward, in which case he was not visible from the window, and Erard would amuse us by regretting that he had no periscope for the transom over the door.

There were two Generals who visited the hospital. The big General, the important one, the Commander of the region, who was always beautiful to look upon in his tight, well-fitting black jacket, trimmed with astrakhan,[4] who came from his limousine with a Normandy stick dangling from his wrist, and who wore spotless, clean gloves. This, the big General, came to decorate the men who were entitled to the *Croix de Guerre* and the *Médaille Militaire*, and after he had decorated one or two, as the case might be, he usually continued on through the hospital, shaking hands here and there with the patients, and chatting with the *Directrice* and with the doctors and officers who followed in his wake. The other General was not nearly so imposing. He was short and fat and dressed in a grey-blue uniform, of the shade known as invisible, and his *képi* was hidden by a grey-blue cover, with a little square hole cut out in front, so that an inch of oak-leaves might be seen. He was much more formidable than the big General, however, since he was the *Médecin Inspecteur*[5] of the region, and was responsible for all the hospitals thereabouts. He made rather extensive rounds, closely questioning the surgeons as to the wounds and treatment of each man, and as he was a doctor as well, he knew how to judge of the replies. Whereas the big General was a soldier and not a doctor, and was thus unable to ask any disconcerting questions, so that his visits, while tedious, were never embarrassing. When a General came on the place, it was a signal to down tools. The surgeons would hurriedly finish their operations, or postpone them if possible, and the dressings in the wards were also stopped or postponed, while the surgeons would hurry after the General, whichever one it was, and make deferential rounds with him, if it took all day. And as it usually took at least two hours, the visits of the Generals, one or both, meant considerable interruption to the hospital routine. Sometimes, by chance, both Generals

4. Dark fleece.

5. Medical inspector.

arrived at the same time, which meant that there were double rounds, beginning at opposite ends of the enclosure, and the surgeons were in a quandary as to whose suite they should attach themselves. And the days when it was busiest, when the work was hardest, when there was more work than double the staff could accomplish in twenty-four hours, were the days that the Generals usually appeared.

There are some days when it is very bad in a field hospital, just as there are some days when there is nothing to do, and the whole staff is practically idle. The bad days are those when the endless roar of the guns makes the little wooden *baracques* rock and rattle, and when endless processions of ambulances drive in and deliver broken, ruined men, and then drive off again, to return loaded with more wrecks. The beds in the *Salle d'Attente*, where the ambulances unload, are filled with heaps under blankets. Coarse, hobnailed boots stick out from the blankets, and sometimes the heaps, which are men, moan or are silent. On the floor lie piles of clothing, filthy, muddy, blood-soaked, torn or cut from the silent bodies on the beds. The stretcher bearers step over these piles of dirty clothing, or kick them aside, as they lift the shrinking bodies to the brown stretchers, and carry them across, one by one, to the operating room. The operating room is filled with stretchers, lying in rows upon the floor, waiting their turn to be emptied, to have their burdens lifted from them to the high operating tables. And as fast as the stretchers are emptied, the stretcher bearers hurry back to the *Salle d'Attente*, where the ambulances dump their loads, and come over to the operating room again, with fresh lots. Three tables going in the operating room, and the white-gowned surgeons stand so thick around the tables that you cannot see what is on them. There are stretchers lying on the floor of the corridor, and against the walls of the operating room, and more ambulances are driving in all the time.

From the operating room they are brought into the wards, these bandaged heaps from the operating tables, these heaps that once were men. The clean beds of the ward are turned back to receive them, to receive the motionless, bandaged heaps that are lifted, shoved, or rolled from the stretchers to the beds. Again and again, all day long, the procession of stretchers comes into the wards. The foremost bearer kicks open the door with his knee, and lets in ahead of him a blast of winter rain, which sets dancing the charts and papers lying on the table, and blows out the alcohol lamp

over which the syringe is boiling.[6] Someone bangs the door shut. The unconscious form is loaded on the bed. He is heavy and the bed sags beneath his weight. The *brancardiers* gather up their red blankets and shuffle off again, leaving cakes of mud and streaks of muddy water on the green linoleum. Outside the guns roar and inside the *baracques* shake, and again and again the stretcher bearers come into the ward, carrying dying men from the high tables in the operating room. They are all that stand between us and the guns, these wrecks upon the beds. Others like them are standing between us and the guns, others like them, who will reach us before morning. Wrecks like these. They are old men, most of them. The old troops, grey and bearded.

There is an attack going on. That does not mean that the Germans are advancing. It just means that the ambulances are busy, for these old troops, these old wrecks upon the beds, are holding up the Germans. Otherwise, we should be swept out of existence. Our hospital, ourselves, would be swept out of existence, were it not for these old wrecks upon the beds. These filthy, bearded, dying men upon the beds, who are holding back the Germans. More like them, in the trenches, are holding back the Germans. By tomorrow these others, too, will be with us, bleeding, dying. But there will be others like them in the trenches, to hold back the Germans.

This is the day of an attack. Yesterday was the day of an attack. The day before was the day of an attack. The guns are raising Hell, seven kilometres beyond us, and our *baracques* shake and tremble with their thunder. These men, grey and bearded, dying in our clean beds, wetting our clean sheets with the blood that oozes from their dressings, have been out there, moaning in the trenches. When they die, we will pull off the bloody sheets, and replace them with fresh, clean ones, and turn them back neatly, waiting for the next agonizing man. We have many beds, and many fresh, clean sheets, and so we are always ready for these old, hairy men, who are standing between us and the Germans.

They seem very weak and frail and thin. How can they do it, these old men? Last summer the young boys did it. Now it is the turn of these old men.

6. For sterilization.

There are three dying in the ward today. It will be better when they die. The German shells have made them ludicrous, repulsive. We see them in this awful interval, between life and death. This interval when they are gross, absurd, fantastic. Life is clean and death is clean, but this interval between the two is gross, absurd, fantastic.

Over there, down at the end, is Rollin. He came in three days ago. A piece of shell penetrated his right eyelid, a little wound so small that it was not worth a dressing. Yet that little piece of *obus*[7] lodged somewhere inside his skull, above his left ear, so the radiographist says, and he's paralyzed. Paralyzed all down the other side, and one supine hand flops about, and one supine leg flops about, in jerks. One bleary eye stays open, and the other eyelid stays shut, over the other bleary eye. Meningitis has set in and it won't be long now, before we'll have another empty bed. Yellow foam flows down his nose, thick yellow foam, bubbles of it, bursting, bubbling yellow foam. It humps up under his nose, up and up, in bubbles, and the bubbles burst and run in turgid streams down upon his shaggy beard. On the wall, above his bed, hang his medals. They are hung up, high up, so he can see them. He can't see them today, because now he is unconscious, but yesterday and the day before, before he got as bad as this, he could see them and it made him cry. He knew he had been decorated *in extremis*, because he was going to die, and he did not want to die. So he sobbed and sobbed all the while the General decorated him, and protested that he did not want to die. He'd saved three men from death, earning those medals, and at the time he never thought of death himself. Yet in the ward he sobbed and sobbed, and protested that he did not want to die.

Back of those red screens is Henri. He is a priest, mobilized as *infirmier*. A good one too, and very tender and gentle with the patients. He comes from the ward next door, Salle II., and is giving extreme unction to the man in that bed, back of the red screens. Peek through the screens and you can see Henri, in his shirt sleeves, with a little, crumpled, purple stole around his neck. No, the patient has never regained consciousness since he's been here, but Henri says it's all right. He may be a Catholic. Better to take chances. It can't hurt him, anyway, if he isn't. I am glad Henri is back of those red screens. A few minutes ago he came down the ward, in search of

7. Artillery shell.

absorbent cotton for the Holy Oils, and then he got so interested watching the doctors doing dressings, stayed so long watching them, that I thought he would not get back again, behind the screens, in time.

See that man in the bed next? He's dying too. They trepanned[8] him when he came. He can't speak, but we got his name and regiment from the medal on his wrist. He wants to write. Isn't it funny! He has a block of paper and a pencil, and all day long he writes, writes, on the paper. Always and always, over and over again, he writes on the paper, and he gives the paper to everyone who passes. He's got something on his mind that he wants to get across, before he dies. But no one can understand him. No one can read what he has written—it is just scrawls, scribbles, unintelligible. Day and night, for he never sleeps, he writes on that block of paper, and tears off the sheets and gives them to everyone who passes. And no one can understand, for it is just illegible, unintelligible scribbles. Once we took the paper away to see what he would do and then he wrote with his finger upon the wooden frame of the screen. The same thing, scribbles, but they made no mark on the screen, and he seemed so distressed because they made no mark that we gave him back his paper again, and now he's happy. Or I suppose he's happy. He seems content when we take this paper and pretend to read it. He seems happy, scribbling those words that are words to him but not to us. Careful! Don't stand too close! He spits. Yes, all the time, at the end of every line he spits. Far too. Way across the ward. Don't you see that his bed and the bed next are covered with rubber sheets? That's because he spits. Big spits, too, far across the ward. And always he writes, incessantly, day and night. He writes on that block of paper and spits way across the ward at the end of every line. He's got something on his mind that he wants to get across. Do you think he's thinking of the Germans? He's dying though. He can't spit so far today as he did yesterday.

Death is dignified and life is dignified, but the intervals are awful. They are ludicrous, repulsive.

Is that Erard, calling? Calling that the Generals are coming, both of them, together? Hurry! Tidy up the ward! Rub away the froth from under Rollin's nose! Pull his sheets straight! Take that wet towel, and clean the

8. Bore holes into his skull to release cranial pressure.

mackintosh upon that bed and the bed adjoining. See if Henri's finished. Take away the screens. Pull the sheets straight. Tidy up the ward—tell the others not to budge! The Generals are coming!

Paris,
9 May, 1916

Women and Wives

A bitter wind swept in from the North Sea. It swept in over many miles of Flanders plains, driving gusts of rain before it. It was a biting gale by the time it reached the little cluster of wooden huts composing the field hospital, and rain and wind together dashed against the huts, blew under them, blew through them, crashed to pieces a swinging window down at the laundry, and loosened the roof of Salle I. at the other end of the enclosure. It was just ordinary winter weather, such as had lasted for months on end, and which the Belgians spoke of as vile weather, while the French called it vile Belgian weather. The drenching rain soaked into the long, green winter grass, and the sweeping wind was bitter cold, and the howling of the wind was louder than the guns, so that it was only when the wind paused for a moment, between blasts, that the rolling of the guns could be heard.

In Salle I. the stove had gone out. It was a good little stove, but somehow was unequal to struggling with the wind which blew down the long, rocking stove pipe, and blew the fire out. So the little stove grew cold, and the hot water jug on the stove grew cold, and all the patients at that end of the ward likewise grew cold, and demanded hot water bottles, and there wasn't any hot water with which to fill them. So the patients complained and shivered, and in the pauses of the wind, one heard the guns.

Then the roof of the ward lifted about an inch, and more wind beat down, and as it beat down, so the roof lifted. The orderly remarked that if this Belgian weather continued, by tomorrow the roof would be clean off—blown off into the German lines. So all laughed as Fouquet said this, and wondered how they could lie abed with the roof of Salle I., the Salle of the *Grands Blessés*, blown over into the German lines. The ward did not present a neat appearance, for all the beds were pushed about at queer angles, in from the wall, out from the wall, some touching each other, some very

far apart, and all to avoid the little leaks of rain which streamed or dropped down from little holes in the roof. This weary, weary war! These long days of boredom in the hospital, these days of incessant wind and rain and cold.

Armand, the chief orderly, ordered Fouquet to rebuild the fire, and Fouquet slipped on his *sabots* and clogged down the ward, away outdoors in the wind, and returned finally with a box of coal on his shoulders, which he dumped heavily on the floor. He was clumsy and sullen, and the coal was wet and mostly slate, and the patients laughed at his efforts to rebuild the fire. Finally, however, it was alight again, and radiated out a faint warmth, which served to bring out the smell of iodoform, and of draining wounds, and other smells which loaded the cold, close air. Then, no one knows who began it, one of the patients showed the nurse a photograph of his wife and child, and in a moment every man in the twenty beds was fishing back of his bed, in his *musette*,[1] under his pillow, for photographs of his wife. They all had wives, it seems, for remember, these were the old troops, who had replaced the young Zouaves who had guarded this part of the Front all summer. One by one they came out, these photographs, from weather-beaten sacks, from shabby boxes, from under pillows, and the nurse must see them all. Pathetic little pictures they were, of common, working-class women, some fat and work-worn, some thin and work-worn, some with stodgy little children grouped about them, some without, but all were practically the same. They were the wives of these men in the beds here, the working-class wives of working-class men—the soldiers of the trenches. Ah yes, France is democratic. It is the Nation's war, and all the men of the Nation, regardless of rank, are serving. But some serve in better places than others. The trenches are mostly reserved for men of the working class, which is reasonable, as there are more of them.

The rain beat down, and the little stove glowed, and the afternoon drew to a close, and the photographs of the wives continued to pass from hand to hand. There was much talk of home, and much of it was longing, and much of it was pathetic, and much of it was resigned. And always the little, ugly wives, the stupid, ordinary wives, represented home. And the words home and wife were interchangeable and stood for the same thing.

1. Canvas sack.

And the glories and heroisms of war seemed of less interest, as a factor in life, than these stupid little wives.

Then Armand, the chief orderly, showed them all the photograph of his wife. No one knew that he was married, but he said yes, and that he received a letter from her every day—sometimes it was a postcard. Also that he wrote to her every day. We all knew how nervous he used to get, about letter time, when the *vaguemestre*[2] made his rounds, every morning, distributing letters to all the wards. We all knew how impatient he used to get, when the *vaguemestre* laid his letter upon the table, and there it lay, on the table, while he was forced to make rounds with the surgeon, and could not claim it until long afterwards. So it was from his wife, that daily letter, so anxiously, so nervously awaited!

Simon had a wife too. Simon, the young surgeon, German-looking in appearance, six feet of blond brute. But not blond brute really. Whatever his appearance, there was in him something finer, something tenderer, something nobler, to distinguish him from the brute. About three times a week he walked into the ward with his fountain pen between his teeth—he did not smoke, but he chewed his fountain pen—and when the dressings were over, he would tell the nurse, shyly, accidentally, as it were, some little news about his home. Some little incident concerning his wife, some affectionate anecdote about his three young children. Once when one of the staff went over to London on vacation, Simon asked her to buy for his wife a leather coat, such as English women wear, for motoring. Always he thought of his wife, spoke of his wife, planned some thoughtful little surprise or gift for her.

You know, they won't let wives come to the Front. Women can come into the War Zone, on various pretexts, but wives cannot. Wives, it appears, are bad for the morale of the Army. They come with their troubles, to talk of how business is failing, of how things are going to the bad at home, because of the war; of how great the struggle, how bitter the trials and the poverty and hardship. They establish the connecting link between the soldier and his life at home, his life that he is compelled to resign. Letters can be censored and all disturbing items cut out, but if a wife is permitted to come to the War Zone, to see her husband, there is no censoring the things she may

2. Military mailman.

tell him. The disquieting, disturbing things. So she herself must be censored, not permitted to come. So for long weary months men must remain at the Front, on active inactivity, and their wives cannot come to see them. Only other people's wives may come. It is not the woman but the wife that is objected to. There is a difference. In war, it is very great.

There are many women at the Front. How do they get there, to the Zone of the Armies? On various pretexts—to see sick relatives, in such and such hospitals, or to see other relatives, brothers, uncles, cousins, other people's husbands—oh, there are many reasons which make it possible for them to come. And always there are the Belgian women, who live in the War Zone, for at present there is a little strip of Belgium left,[3] and all the civilians have not been evacuated from the Army Zone. So there are plenty of women, first and last. Better ones for the officers, naturally, just as the officers' mess[4] is of better quality than that of the common soldiers. But always there are plenty of women. Never wives, who mean responsibility, but just women, who only mean distraction and amusement, just as food and wine. So wives are forbidden, because lowering to the morale, but women are winked at, because they cheer and refresh the troops. After the war, it is hoped that all unmarried soldiers will marry, but doubtless they will not marry these women who have served and cheered them in the War Zone. That, again, would be depressing to the country's morale. It is rather paradoxical, but there are those who can explain it perfectly.

No, no, I don't understand. It's because everything has two sides. You would be surprised to pick up a franc, and find Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity on one side, and on the other, the image of the Sower smoothed out.[5] A rose is a fine rose because of the manure you put at its roots. You don't get a medal for sustained nobility. You get it for the impetuous action of the moment, an action quite out of keeping with the trend of one's daily life. You speak of the young aviator who was decorated for destroying a

3. Germany invaded neutral Belgium in August 1914 and held most of its territory, but a small area remained under Belgian control, defended by the Allied armies.

4. Food.

5. The basic unit of French currency was a coin called a franc. On one side appeared the nation's motto, "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity." On the other side appeared a woman scattering seeds, the Sower.

Zeppelin[6] single-handed, and in the next breath you add, and he killed himself, a few days later, by attempting to fly when he was drunk. So it goes. There is a dirty sediment at the bottom of most souls. War, superb as it is, is not necessarily a filtering process, by which men and nations may be purified. Well, there are many people to write you of the noble side, the heroic side, the exalted side of war. I must write you of what I have seen, the other side, the backwash. They are both true. In Spain, they bang their silver coins upon a marble slab, accepting the stamp upon both sides, and then decide whether as a whole they ring true.

Every now and then, Armand, the orderly, goes to the village to get a bath. He comes back with very clean hands and nails, and says that it has greatly solaced him, the warm water. Then later, that same evening, he gets permission to be absent from the hospital, and he goes to our village to a girl. But he is always as eager, as nervous for his wife's letter as ever. It is the same with Simon, the young surgeon. Only Simon keeps himself pretty clean at all times, as he has an orderly to bring him pitchers of hot water every morning, as many as he wants. But Simon has a girl in the village, to whom he goes every week. Only, why does he talk so incessantly about his wife, and show her pictures to me, to everyone about the place? Why should we all be bored with tales of Simon's stupid wife, when that's all she means to him? Only perhaps she means more. I told you I did not understand.

Then the *Gestionnaire*,[7] the little fat man in khaki, who is purveyor to the hospital. Every night he commandeers an ambulance, and drives back into the country, to a village twelve miles away, to sleep with a woman. And the old doctor—he is sixty-four and has grandchildren—he goes down to our village for a little girl of fourteen. He was decorated with the Legion of Honour the other day. It seems incongruous.

Oh yes, of course these were decent girls at the start, at the beginning of the war. But you know women, how they run after men, especially when the men wear uniforms, all gilt buttons and braid. It's not the men's fault that most of the women in the War Zone are ruined. Have you ever watched the village girls when a regiment comes through, or stops for a night or two, *en*

6. German airship.

7. Administrator.

repos,[8] on its way to the Front? Have you seen the girls make fools of themselves over the men? Well, that's why there are so many accessible for the troops. Of course the professional prostitutes from Paris aren't admitted to the War Zone, but the Belgian girls made such fools of themselves, the others weren't needed.

Across the lines, back of the German lines, in the invaded districts, it is different. The conquering armies just ruined all the women they could get hold of. Any one will tell you that. *Ces sales Bosches!*[9] For it is inconceivable how any decent girl, even a Belgian, could give herself up voluntarily to a Hun![10] They used force, those brutes! That is the difference. It's all the difference in the world. No, the women over there didn't make fools of themselves over those men—how could they! No, no. Over there, in the invaded districts, the Germans forced those girls. Here, on this side, the girls cajoled the men till they gave in. Can't you see? You must be pro-German! Any way, they are all ruined and not fit for any decent man to mate with, after the war.

They are pretty dangerous, too, some of these women. No, I don't mean in that way. But they act as spies for the Germans and get a lot of information out of the men, and send it back, somehow, into the German lines. The Germans stop at nothing, nothing is too dastardly, too low, for them to attempt. There were two Belgian girls once, who lived together in a room, in a little village back of our lines. They were natives, and had always lived there, so of course they were not turned out, and when the village was shelled from time to time, they did not seem to mind and altogether they made a lot of money. They only received officers. The common soldiers were just dirt to them, and they refused to see them. Certain women get known in a place, as those who receive soldiers and those who receive officers. These girls were intelligent, too, and always asked a lot of intelligent, interested questions, and you know a man when he is excited will answer unsuspectingly any question put to him. The Germans took advantage of that. It is easy to be a spy. Just know what questions you must ask, and it is surprising how much information you can get. The thing is, to know upon what point information is wanted. These girls knew that, it seems, and so they

8. At rest.

9. Those dirty Germans!

10. Derogatory term for a German.

asked a lot of intelligent questions, and as they received only officers, they got a good lot of valuable information, for as I say, when a man is excited he will answer many questions. Besides, who could have suspected at first that these two girls were spies? But they were, as they found out finally, after several months. Their rooms were one day searched, and a mass of incriminating papers were discovered. It seems the Germans had taken these girls from their families—held their families as hostages—and had sent them across into the English lines, with threats of vile reprisals upon their families if they did not produce information of value. Wasn't it beastly! Making these girls prostitutes and spies, upon pain of reprisals upon their families. The Germans knew they were so attractive that they would receive only officers. That they would receive many clients, of high rank, of much information, who would readily fall victims to their wiles. They are very vile themselves, these Germans. The curious thing is, how well they understand how to bait a trap for their enemies. In spite of having nothing in common with them, how well they understand the nature of those who are fighting in the name of Justice, of Liberty and Civilization.

Paris,
4 May, 1916

Pour la Patrie

This is how it was. It is pretty much always like this in a field hospital. Just ambulances rolling in, and dirty, dying men, and the guns off there in the distance! Very monotonous, and the same, day after day, till one gets so tired and bored. Big things may be going on over there, on the other side of the captive balloons[1] that we can see from a distance, but we are always here, on this side of them, and here, on this side of them, it is always the same. The weariness of it—the sameness of it! The same ambulances, and dirty men, and groans, or silence. The same hot operating rooms, the same beds, always full, in the wards. This is war. But it goes on and on, over and over, day after day, till it seems like life. Life in peace time. It might be life in a big city hospital, so alike is the routine. Only the city hospitals are bigger, and better equipped, and the ambulances are smarter, and the patients don't always come in ambulances—they walk in sometimes, or come in street cars, or in limousines, and they are of both sexes, men and women, and have ever so many things the matter with them—the hospitals of peace time are not nearly so stupid, so monotonous, as the hospitals of war. Bah! War's humane compared to peace! More spectacular, I grant you, more acute,—that's what interests us,—but for the sheer agony of life—oh, peace is way ahead!

War is so clean. Peace is so dirty. There are so many foul diseases in peace times. They drag on over so many years, too. No, war's clean! I'd rather see a man die in prime of life, in war time, than see him doddering along in peace time, broken hearted, broken spirited, life broken, and very weary, having suffered many things,—to die at last, at a good, ripe age! How they

The title translates as "For the Nation."

1. The manned observation balloons.

have suffered, those who drive up to our city hospitals in limousines, in peace time. What's been saved them, those who die young, and clean and swiftly, here behind the guns. In the long run it dots up just the same. Only war's spectacular, that's all.

Well, he came in like the rest, only older than most of them. A shock of iron-grey hair, a mane of it, above heavy, black brows, and the brows were contracted in pain. Shot, as usual, in the abdomen. He spent three hours on the table after admission—the operating table—and when he came over to the ward, they said, not a dog's chance for him. No more had he. When he came out of ether, he said he didn't want to die. He said he wanted to live. Very much. He said he wanted to see his wife again and his children. Over and over he insisted on this, insisted on getting well. He caught hold of the doctor's hand and said he must get well, that the doctor must get him well. Then the doctor drew away his slim fingers from the rough, imploring grasp, and told him to be good and patient.

"Be good! Be patient!" said the doctor, and that was all he could say, for he was honest. What else could he say, knowing that there were eighteen little holes, cut by the bullet, leaking poison into that gashed, distended abdomen? When these little holes, that the doctor could not stop, had leaked enough poison into his system, he would die. Not today, no, but day after tomorrow. Three days more.

So all that first day, the man talked of getting well. He was insistent on that. He was confident. Next day, the second of the three days the doctor gave him, very much pain laid hold of him. His black brows bent with pain and he grew puzzled. How could one live with such pain as that?

That afternoon, about five o'clock, came the General. The one who decorates the men. He had no sword, just a riding whip, so he tossed the whip on the bed, for you can't do an accolade with anything but a sword. Just the *Médaille Militaire*. Not the other one. But the *Médaille Militaire* carries a pension of a hundred francs a year, so that's something. So the General said, very briefly: "In the name of the Republic of France, I confer upon you the *Médaille Militaire*." Then he bent over and kissed the man on his forehead, pinned the medal to the bedspread, and departed.

There you are! Just a brief little ceremony, and perfunctory. We all got that impression. The General has decorated so many dying men. And this one seemed so nearly dead. He seemed half-conscious. Yet the General

might have put a little more feeling into it, not made it quite so perfunctory. Yet he's done this thing so many, many times before. It's all right, he does it differently when there are people about, but this time there was no one present—just the doctor, the dying man, and me. And so we four knew what it meant—just a widow's pension. Therefore there wasn't any reason for the accolade, for the sonorous, ringing phrases of a dress parade——

We all knew what it meant. So did the man. When he got the medal, he knew too. He knew there wasn't any hope. I held the medal before him, after the General had gone, in its red plush case. It looked cheap, somehow. The exchange didn't seem even. He pushed it aside with a contemptuous hand sweep, a disgusted shrug.

"I've seen these things before!" he exclaimed. We all had seen them too. We all knew about them, he and the doctor, and the General and I. He knew and understood, most of all. And his tone was bitter.

After that, he knew the doctor couldn't save him, and that he should not see his wife and children again. Whereupon he became angry with the treatment, and protested against it. The *picqures* hurt—they hurt very much, and he did not want them. Moreover, they did no good, for his pain was now very intense, and he tossed and tossed to get away from it.

So the third day dawned, and he was alive, and dying, and knew that he was dying. Which is unusual and disconcerting. He turned over and over, and black fluid vomited from his mouth into the white enamel basin. From time to time, the orderly emptied the basin, but always there was more, and always he choked and gasped and knit his brows in pain. Once his face broke up as a child's breaks up when it cries. So he cried in pain and loneliness and resentment.

He struggled hard to hold on. He wanted very much to live, but he could not do it. He said: *"Je ne tiens plus."*[2]

Which was true. He couldn't hold on. The pain was too great. He clenched his hands and writhed, and cried out for mercy. But what mercy had we? We gave him morphia, but it did not help. So he continued to cry to us for mercy, he cried to us and to God. Between us, we let him suffer eight hours more like that, us and God.

2. I can't hold on.

Then I called the priest. We have three priests on the ward, as orderlies, and I got one of them to give him the Sacrament. I thought it would quiet him. We could not help him with drugs, and he had not got it quite in his head that he must die, and when he said, "I am dying," he expected to be contradicted. So I asked Capolarde to give him the Sacrament, and he said yes, and put a red screen around the bed, to screen him from the ward. Then Capolarde turned to me and asked me to leave. It was summer time. The window at the head of the bed was open, the hay outside was new cut and piled into little haycocks. Over in the distance the guns rolled. As I turned to go, I saw Capolarde holding a tray of Holy Oils in one hand, while with the other he emptied the basin containing black vomitus out the window.

No, it did not bring him comfort, or resignation. He fought against it. He wanted to live, and he resented Death, very bitterly. Down at my end of the ward—it was a silent, summer afternoon—I heard them very clearly. I heard the low words from behind the screen.

"Dites:[3] *'Dieu je vous donne ma vie librement pour ma patrie'"* (God, I give you my life freely for my country). The priests usually say that to them, for death has more dignity that way. It is not in the ritual, but it makes a soldier's death more noble. So I suppose Capolarde said it. I could only judge by the response. I could hear the heavy, laboured breath, the choking, wailing cry.

"Oui! Oui!"[4] gasped out at intervals. *"Ah mon Dieu! Oui!"*[5]

Again the mumbling, guiding whisper.

"Oui—oui!" came sobbing, gasping, in response.

So I heard the whispers, the priest's whispers, and the stertorous choke, the feeble, wailing, rebellious wailing in response. He was being forced into it. Forced into acceptance. Beaten into submission, beaten into resignation.

"Oui, oui" came the protesting moans. *"Ah, oui!"*

It must be dawning upon him now. Capolarde is making him see.

"Oui! Oui!" The choking sobs reach me. *"Ah, mon Dieu, oui!"* Then very deep, panting, crying breaths:

"Dieu—je—vous—donne—ma—vie—librement—pour—ma—patrie!"

3. Say.
4. Yes! Yes!
5. Oh my God! Yes!

"Librement! Librement! Ah, oui! Oui!"[6] He was beaten at last. The choking, dying, bewildered man had said the noble words.

"God, I give you my life freely for my country!"

After which came a volley of low toned Latin phrases, rattling in the stillness like the popping of a *mitrailleuse*.[7]

Two hours later he was still alive, restless, but no longer resentful. "It is difficult to go," he murmured, and then: "Tonight, I shall sleep well." A long pause followed, and he opened his eyes.

"Without doubt, the next world is more *chic* than this," he remarked smiling, and then:

"I was mobilized against my inclination. Now I have won the *Médaille Militaire*. My Captain won it for me. He made me brave. He had a revolver in his hand."

6. Freely! Freely! Oh, yes! Yes!

7. Machine gun.

Locomotor Ataxia

Just inside the entrance gates a big, flat-topped tent was pitched, which bore over the low door a signboard on which was painted, *Triage No. I. Malades et Blessés Assis*.[1] This meant that those *assis*, able to travel in the ambulances as "sitters," were to be deposited here for diagnosis and classification. Over beyond was the *Salle d'Attente*, the hut for receiving the *grands blessés*, but a tent was sufficient for sick men and those slightly wounded. It was an old tent, weatherbeaten, a dull, dirty grey. Within the floor was of earth, and along each side ran long, narrow, backless benches, on which the sick men and the slightly wounded sat, waiting sorting. A grey twilight pervaded the interior, and the everlasting Belgian rain beat down upon the creaking canvas, beat down in gentle, dripping patters, or in hard, noisy gusts, as it happened. It was always dry inside, however, and the earth floor was dusty, except at the entrance, where a triangle of mud projected almost to the doctor's table, in the middle.

The *Salle d'Attente* was different. It was more comfortable. The seriously wounded were unloaded carefully and placed upon beds covered with rubber sheeting, and clean sacking, which protected the thin mattresses from blood. The patients were afterwards covered with red blankets, and stone hot water bottles were also given them, sometimes. But in the sorting tent there were no such comforts. They were not needed. The sick men and the slightly wounded could sit very well on the backless benches till the *Médecin Major* had time to come and examine them.

Quite a company of "sitters" were assembled here one morning, helped out of two big ambulances that drove in within ten minutes of each other. They were a dejected lot, and they stumbled into the tent unsteadily,

1. Triage No. 1. Sick and Sitting Wounded.

groping towards the benches, upon which they tried to pose their weary, old, fevered bodies in comfortable attitudes. And as it couldn't be done, there was a continual shifting movement, and unrest. Heavy legs in heavy wet boots were shoved stiffly forward, then dragged back again. Old, thin bodies bent forward, twisted sideways, coarse, filthy hands hung supine between spread knees, and then again the hands would change, and support whiskered, discouraged faces. They were all uncouth, grotesque, dejected, and they smelt abominably, these *poilus*,[2] these hairy, unkempt soldiers. At their feet, their sacks lay, bulging with their few possessions. They hadn't much, but all they had lay there, at their feet. Old brown canvas sacks, bulging, muddy, worn, worn-out, like their owners. Tied on the outside were water cans, and extra boots, and bayonets, and inside were socks and writing paper and photographs of ugly wives. Therefore the ungainly sacks were precious, and they hugged them with their tired feet, afraid that they might lose them.

Then finally the *Major* arrived, and began the business of sorting them. He was brisk and alert, and he called them one by one to stand before him. They shuffled up to his little table, wavering, deprecating, humble, and answered his brief impatient questions. And on the spot he made snap diagnoses, such as rheumatism, bronchitis, kicked by a horse, knocked down by despatch rider, dysentery, and so on—a paltry, stupid lot of ailments and minor accidents, demanding a few days' treatment. It was a dull service, this medical service, yet one had to be always on guard against contagion, so the service was a responsible one. But the *Major* worked quickly, sorted them out hastily, and then one by one they disappeared behind a hanging sheet, where the orderlies took off their old uniforms, washed the patients a little, and then led them to the wards. It was a stupid service! So different from that of the *grands blessés!* There was some interest in that! But this *éclopé*[3] business, these minor ailments, this stream of petty sickness, petty accidents, dirty skin diseases, and vermin—all war, if you like, but how *banale!*[4]

* * *

2. French soldiers.
3. Walking wounded.
4. Ordinary.

Later, in the medical wards, the *Major* made his rounds, to inspect more carefully the men upon whom he had made snap diagnoses, to correct the diagnosis, if need be, and to order treatment. The chief treatment they needed was a bath, a clean bed, and a week of sleep, but the doctor, being fairly conscientious, thought to hurry things a little, to hasten the return of these old, tired men to the trenches, so that they might come back to the hospital again as *grands blessés*. In which event they would be interesting. So he ordered *ventouses* or cupping, for the bronchitis cases. There is much bronchitis in Flanders, in the trenches, because of the incessant Belgian rain. They are sick with it too, poor devils. So said the *Major* to himself as he made his rounds.

Five men here, lying in a row, all ptomaine poisoning,[5] due to some rank tinned stuff they'd been eating. Yonder there, three men with itch—filthy business![6] Their hands all covered with it, tearing at their bodies with their black, claw-like nails! The orderlies had not washed them very thoroughly—small blame to them! So the *Major* made his rounds, walking slowly, very bored, but conscientious. These dull wrecks were needed in the trenches. He must make them well.

At Bed 9, André stopped. Something different this time. He tried to recall it. Oh yes—in the sorting tent he'd noticed——

"Monsieur Major!" A thin hand, clean and slim, rose to the salute. The bed covers were very straight, sliding neither to this side nor to that, as covers slide under restless pain.

"I cannot walk, *Monsieur Major*."

So André stopped, attentive. The man continued.

"I cannot walk, *Monsieur Major*. Because of that, from the trenches I was removed a month ago. After that I was given a *fourgon*, a wagon in which to transport the loaves of bread. But soon it arrived that I could not climb to the high seat of my wagon, nor could I mount to the saddle of my horse. So I was obliged to lead my horses, stumbling at their bridles. So I have stumbled for the past four weeks. But now I cannot even do that. It is very painful."

5. Food poisoning.

6. French soldiers were often afflicted with scabies, a contagious skin disease.

André passed a hand over his short, thick, upright hair, and smoothed his stiff brush reflectively. Then he put questions to the man, confidentially, and at the answers continued to rub backward his tight brush of hair. After which he disappeared from the ward for a time, but returned presently, bringing with him a Paris surgeon who happened to be visiting the Front that day. There also came with him another little doctor of the hospital staff, who was interested in what André had told him of the case. The three stood together at the foot of the bed, stroking their beards and their hair meditatively, while they plied the patient with questions. After which they directed Alphonse, the swarthy, dark orderly, who looked like a brigand, and Henri, the priest-orderly, to help the patient to rise.

They stood him barefoot upon the floor, supporting him slightly by each elbow. To his knees, or just above them, fell a scant, gay, pink flannel nightshirt, his sole garment. It was one of many warm, gay nightshirts, pink and cheerful, that some women of America had sent over to the wounded heroes of France. It made a bright spot of colour in the sombre ward, and through the open window, one caught glimpses of green hop fields, and a windmill in the distance, waving its slow arms.

"Walk," commanded André. "Walk to the door. Turn and return."

The man staggered between the beds, holding to them, half bent over, fearful. Cool summer air blew in through the window, waving the pink nightshirt, making goose flesh rise on the shapely white legs that wavered. Then he moved down the ward, between the rows of beds, moving with uncertain, running, halting steps. Upon the linoleum, his bare feet flapped in soft thumps, groping wildly, interfering, knocking against each other. The man, trying to control them, gazed in fright from side to side. Down to the door he padded, rocked, swayed, turned and almost fell. Then back again he flapped.

Dense stillness in the ward, broken only by the hard, unsteady thumping of the bare feet. The feet masterless, as the spirit had been masterless, years ago. The three judges in white blouses stood with arms folded, motionless. The patients in the beds sat up and tittered. The man who had been kicked by a horse raised himself and smiled. He who had been knocked down by a despatch rider sat up, as did those with bronchitis, and those with ptomaine poisoning. They sat up, looked, and sniggered. They knew. So did André. So did the Paris surgeon, and the little staff doctor, and the swarthy

orderly and the priest-orderly. They all knew. The patient knew too. The laughter of his comrades told him.[7]

So he was to be released from the army, physically unfit. He could no longer serve his country. For many months he had faced death under the guns, a glorious death. Now he was to face death in another form. Not glorious, shameful. Only he didn't know much about it, and couldn't visualize it—after all, he might possibly escape. He who had so loved life. So he was rather pleased to be released from service.

The patients in the surrounding beds ceased laughing. They had other things to think about. As soon as they were cured of the dysentery and of the itch, they were going back again to the trenches, under the guns. So they pitied themselves, and they rather envied him, being released from the army. They didn't know much about it, either. They couldn't visualize an imbecile, degrading, lingering death.[8] They could only comprehend escape from sudden death, under the guns.

One way or another, it is about the same. Tragedy either way, and death either way. But the tragedies of peace equal the tragedies of war. The sum total of suffering is the same. They balance up pretty well.

Paris,
18 June, 1916

7. The patient's loss of physical coordination is due to advanced-stage syphilis, a sexually transmitted disease. The condition is called *locomotor ataxia,* the title of this story.

8. From syphilis.

A Surgical Triumph

In the Latin Quarter,[1] somewhere about the intersection of the Boulevard Montparnasse with the rue de Rennes[2]—it might have been even a little way back of the Gare Montparnasse, or perhaps in the other direction where the rue Vabin cuts into the rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs—any one who knows the Quarter will know about it at once—there lived a little hairdresser by the name of Antoine. Some ten years ago Antoine had moved over from Montmartre,[3] for he was a good hairdresser and a thrifty soul, and he wanted to get on in life, and at that time nothing seemed to him so profitable an investment as to set up a shop in the neighbourhood patronized by Americans. American students were always wanting their hair washed, so he was told—once a week at least—and in that they differed from the Russian and Polish and Roumanian and other students of Paris, a fact which determined Antoine to go into business at the Montparnasse end of the Quarter, rather than at the lower end, say round the Pantheon and Saint-Etienne-du-Mont. And as he determined to put his prices low, in order to catch the trade, so later on when his business thrived enormously, he continued to keep them low, in order to maintain his clients. For if you once get used to having your hair washed for two francs, and very well done at that, it is annoying to find that the price has gone up over night to the prices one pays on the Boulevard Capucines. Therefore for ten years Antoine continued to wash hair at two francs a head, and at the same time he earned quite a reputation for himself as a marvellous good person when it came to waves and curls. So that when the war broke out, and his American

1. An area of Paris, located on the left bank of the Seine.

2. La Motte had lived in a boarding house on Boulevard Montparnasse for much of the year preceding the war.

3. An area of Paris popular with artists because of its low rents.

clients broke and ran, he had a neat, tidy sum saved up, and could be fairly complacent about it all. Moreover, he was a lame man, one leg being some three inches shorter than the other, due to an accident in childhood, so he had never done his military service in his youth, and while not over military age, even yet, there was no likelihood of his ever being called upon to do it. So he stood in the doorway of his deserted shop, for all his young assistants, his curlers and shampooers, had been mobilized, and looked up and down the deserted street, and congratulated himself that he was not in as bad a plight, financially and otherwise, as some of his neighbours.

Next door to him was a restaurant where the students ate, many of them. It had enjoyed a high reputation for cheapness, up to the war, and twice a day had been thronged with a mixed crowd of sculptors and painters and writers, and just dilettantes, which latter liked to patronize it for what they were pleased to call "local colour." Well, look at it now, thought the thrifty Antoine. Everyone gone, except a dozen stranded students who had not money enough to escape, and who, in the kindness of their hearts, continued to eat here "on credit," in order to keep the proprietor going. Even such a fool as the proprietor must see, sooner or later, that patronage of this sort could lead nowhere, from the point of view of profits—in fact, it was ridiculous.

Antoine, lounging in his doorway, thought of his son. His only son, who, thank God, was too young to enter the army. By the time he was old enough for his military service, the war would all be over—it could not last, at the outside, more than six weeks or a couple of months—so Antoine had no cause for anxiety on that account. The lad was a fine, husky youth, with a sprouting moustache, which made him look older than his seventeen years. He was being taught the art of washing hair, and of curling and dyeing the same, on the human head or aside from it, as the case might be, and he could snap curling irons with a click to inspire confidence in the minds of the most fastidious, so altogether, thought Antoine, he had a good future before him. So the war had no terrors for Antoine, and he was able to speculate freely upon the future of his son, which seemed like a very bright, admirable future indeed, in spite of the disturbances of the moment. Nor did he need to close the doors of his establishment either, in spite of the loss of his assistants, and the loss of his many customers who kept those assistants as well as himself busy. For there still remained in Paris a good many

American heads to be washed, from time to time—rather foolhardy, adventurous heads, curious, sensation hunting heads, who had remained in Paris to see the war, or as much of it as they could, in order to enrich their own personal experience. With which point of view Antoine had no quarrel, although there were certain of his countrymen who wished these inquisitive foreigners would return to their native land, for a variety of reasons.

As the months rolled along, however, he who had been so farseeing, so thrifty a business man, seemed to have made a mistake. His calculations as to the duration of the war all went wrong. It seemed to be lasting an unconscionable time, and every day it seemed to present new phases for which no immediate settlement offered itself. Thus a year dragged away, and Antoine's son turned eighteen, and his moustache grew to be so imposing that his father commanded him to shave it. At the end of another two months, Antoine found it best to return his son to short trousers, for although the boy was stout and fat, he was not tall, and in short trousers he looked merely an overgrown fat boy, and Antoine was growing rather worried as he saw the lads of the young classes called to the colours. Somewhere, in one of the *Mairies*[4] of Paris—over at Montmartre, perhaps, where he had come from, or at the *Préfecture de Police*,[5] or the *Cité*[6]—Antoine knew that there [was] a record of his son's age and attainments, which might be used against him at any moment, and as the weeks grew into months, it seemed certain that the class to which this precious son belonged would be called on for military service. Then very hideous weeks followed for Antoine, weeks of nervous suspense and dread. Day by day, as the lad grew in proficiency and aptitude, as he became more and more expert in the matters of his trade, as he learned a delicate, sure touch with the most refractory hair, and could expend the minimum of gas on the drying machine, and the minimum of soap lather, and withal attain the best results in pleasing his customers, so grew the danger of his being snatched away from this wide life spread out before him, of being forced to fight for his glorious country. Poor fat boy!

4. Town halls.
5. Police headquarters.
6. Central registry.

On Sundays he used to parade the Raspail[7] with a German shepherd dog at his heels—bought two years ago as a German shepherd, but now called a Belgian Police dog—how could he lay aside his little trousers and become a soldier of France! Yet every day that time drew nearer, till finally one day the summons came, and the lad departed, and Antoine closed his shutters for a whole week, mourning desperately. And he was furious against England, which had not made her maximum effort, had not mobilized her men, had continued with business as usual, had made no attempt to end the war—wouldn't do so, until France had become exhausted. And he was furious against Russia, swamped in a bog of political intrigue, which lacked organization and munitions and leadership, and was totally unable to [draw] off the Bosches[8] on the other frontier, and delivering a blow to smash them. In fact, Antoine was far more furious against the Allies of France than against Germany itself. And his rage and grief absolutely overbalanced his pride in his son, or his ambitions as to his son's possible achievements. The boy himself did not mind going, when he was called, for he was something of a fatalist, being so young, and besides, he could not foresee things. But Antoine, little lame man, had much imagination and foresaw a great deal.

Mercifully, he could not foresee what actually happened. Thus it was a shock to him. He learned that his son was wounded, and then followed many long weeks while the boy lay in hospital, during which time many kind-hearted Red Cross ladies wrote to Antoine, telling him to be of brave heart and of good courage. And Antoine, being a rich man, in a small hairdressing way, took quite large sums of money out of the bank from time to time, and sent them to the Red Cross ladies, to buy for his son whatever might be necessary to his recovery. He heard from the hospital in the interior—for they were taking most of the wounded to the interior, at that time, for fear of upsetting Paris by the sight of them in the streets—that artificial legs were costly. Thus he steeled himself to the fact that his son would be more hideously lame than he himself. There was some further consultation about artificial arms, rather vague, but Antoine was troubled. Then he learned that a marvellous operation had been performed upon the boy, known as plastic surgery, that is to say, the rebuilding, out

7. Boulevard Raspail.

8. Derogatory term for Germans.

of other parts of the body, of certain features of the face that are missing. All this while he heard nothing directly from the lad himself, and in every letter from the Red Cross ladies, dictated to them, the boy begged that neither his father nor his mother would make any attempt to visit him at the hospital, in the interior, till he was ready.

Finally, the lad was "ready." He had been four or five months in hospital, and the best surgeons of the country had done for him the best they knew. They had not only saved his life, but, thanks to his father's money, he had been fitted out with certain artificial aids to the human body which would go far towards making life supportable. In fact, they expressed themselves as extremely gratified with what they had been able to do for the poor young man, nay, they were even proud of him. He was a surgical triumph, and as such they were returning him to Paris, by such and such a train, upon such and such a day. Antoine went to meet the train.

In a little room back of the hairdressing shop, Antoine looked down upon the surgical triumph. This triumph was his son. The two were pretty well mixed up. A passion of love and a passion of furious resentment filled the breast of the little hairdresser. Two very expensive, very good artificial legs lay on the sofa beside the boy. They were nicely jointed and had cost several hundred francs. From the same firm it would also be possible to obtain two very nice artificial arms, light, easily adjustable, well hinged. A hideous flabby heap, called a nose, fashioned by unique skill out of the flesh of his breast, replaced the little snub nose that Antoine remembered. The mouth they had done little with. All the front teeth were gone, but these could doubtless be replaced, in time, by others. Across the lad's forehead was a black silk bandage, which could be removed later, and in his pocket there was an address from which artificial eyes might be purchased. They would have fitted him out with eyes, in the provinces, except that such were better obtainable in Paris. Antoine looked down upon this wreck of his son that lay before him, and the wreck, not appreciating that he was a surgical triumph, kept sobbing, kept weeping out of his sightless eyes, kept jerking his four stumps in supplication, kept begging in agony:

"Kill me, Papa!"

However, Antoine couldn't do this, for he was civilized.

At the Telephone

As he hadn't died in the ambulance, coming from the *Poste de Secours*, the surgeons concluded that they would give him another chance, and risk it on the operating table. He was nearly dead, anyway, so it didn't much matter, although the chance they proposed to give him wasn't even a fighting chance—it was just one in a thousand, some of them put it at one in ten thousand. Accordingly, they cut his clothes off in the *Salle d'Attente*, and carried him, very dirty and naked, to the operating room. Here they found that his ten-thousandth chance would be diminished if they gave him a general anæsthetic, so they dispensed with chloroform and gave him spinal anæsthesia, by injecting something into his spinal canal, between two of the low vertebræ. This completely relieved him of pain, but made him talkative, and when they saw he was conscious like that, it was decided to hold a sheet across the middle of him, so that he could not see what was going on, on the other side of the sheet, below his waist.

The temperature in the operating room was stifling hot, and the sweat poured in drops from the brows of the surgeons, so that it took an orderly, with a piece of gauze, to swab them constantly. However, for all the heat, the man was stone cold and ashen grey, and his nostrils were pinched and dilated, while his breath came in gasps, forty to the minute. Yet, as I say, he was talkative, and his stream of little, vapid remarks, at his end of the sheet, did much to drown the clicking and snapping of clamps on the other side of it, where the surgeons were working to give him his one chance.

A nurse held the sheet on one side of the table, and a priest-orderly held it at the other, and at his head stood a doctor, and the *Directrice* and another nurse, answering the string of vapid remarks and trying to soothe him. And three feet farther along, hidden from him and the little clustering company of people trying to distract his attention, stood the two surgeons, and the

two young students, and just the tops of their hair could be seen over the edge of the sheet. They whispered a little from time to time, and worked very rapidly, and there was quite animated talking when the bone saw began to rasp.

The man babbled of his home, and of his wife. He said he wanted to see her again, very much. And the priest-orderly, who wanted to drop his end of the sheet and administer the last Sacrament at once, grew very nervous and uneasy. So the man rambled on, gasping, and they replied to him in soothing manner, and told him that there was a chance that he might see her again. So he talked about her incessantly, and with affection, and his whispered words and the cheery replies quite drowned out the clicking and the snapping of the clamps. After a short while, however, his remarks grew less coherent, and he seemed to find himself back in the trenches, telephoning.[1] He tried hard to telephone, he tried hard to get the connection. The wires seemed to be cut, however, and he grew puzzled, and knit his brows and swore, and tried again and again, over and over. He had something to say over the telephone, the trench communication wire, and his mind wandered, and he tried very hard, in his wandering mind, to get the connection. A shell had cut the line evidently. He grew annoyed and restless, and gazed anxiously and perplexedly at the white sheet, held so steadily across his middle. From the waist down he could not move, so all his restlessness took place on the upper side of the sheet, and he was unaware of what was going on on the other side of it, and so failed to hear the incessant rattle of clamps and the subdued whispers from the other side.

He struggled hard to get the connection, in his mind, over the telephone. The wires seemed to be cut, and he cried out in anxiety and distress. Then he grew more and more feeble, and gasped more and more, and became almost inarticulate, in his efforts. He was distressed. But suddenly he got it. He screamed out very loud, relieved, satisfied, triumphant, startling them all.

"Ça y est, maintenant! Ça y est! C'est le bon Dieu à l'appareil!" (All right now! All right! It is the good God at the telephone!)

1. Telephones were used to communicate between the trenches and rear headquarters, but their cables were frequently severed by enemy artillery.

A drop of blood spotted the sheet, a sudden vivid drop which spread rapidly, coming through. The surgeon raised himself.

"Finished here!" he exclaimed with satisfaction.

"Finished here," repeated the *Directrice*.

Paris,
26 June, 1916

A Citation

As a person, Grammont amounted to very little. In private life, before the war broke out, he had been an acrobat in the streets of Paris, and after that he became a hotel boy in some little fifth-rate hotel over behind the Gare St. Lazare. That had proved his undoing, for even the fifth-rate French travelling salesmen and sharpers and adventurers who patronized the hotel had money enough for him to steal. He stole a little, favoured by his position as *garçon d'hôtel*,[1] and the theft had landed him, not in jail, but in the *Bataillon d'Afrique*. He had served in that for two years, doing his military service in the *Bataillon d'Afrique* instead of jail, while working off his five year sentence, and then war being declared, his regiment was transferred from Morocco to France, to Flanders, to the front line trenches, and in course of time he arrived one day at the hospital with a piece of shell in his spleen.

He was pretty ill when brought in, and if he had died promptly, as he should have done, it would have been better. But it happened at that time that there was a surgeon connected with the hospital who was bent on making a reputation for himself, and this consisted in trying to prolong the lives of wounded men who ought normally and naturally to have died. So this surgeon worked hard to save Grammont, and certainly succeeded in prolonging his life, and in prolonging his suffering, over a very considerable portion of time. He worked hard over him, and he used on him everything he could think of, everything that money could buy. Every time he had a new idea as to treatment, no matter how costly it might be, he mentioned it to the *Directrice*, who sent to Paris and got it. All the while Grammont remained in bed, in very great agony, the surgeon making copious notes on

1. Hotel porter.

the case, noting that under such and such circumstances, under conditions such as the following, such and such remedies and treatment proved futile and valueless. Grammont had a hole in his abdomen, when he entered, about an inch long. After about a month, this hole was scientifically increased to a foot in length, rubber drains stuck out in all directions, and went inwards as well, pretty deep, and his pain was enhanced a hundredfold, while his chances of recovery were not bright. But Grammont had a good constitution, and the surgeon worked hard over him, for if he got well, it would be a wonderful case, and the surgeon's reputation would benefit. Grammont bore it all very patiently, and did not ask to be allowed to die, as many of them did, for since he was of the *Bataillon d'Afrique*, such a request would be equivalent to asking for a remission of sentence—a sentence which the courts averred he justly deserved and merited. They took no account of the fact that his ethics were those of a wandering juggler, turning somersaults on a carpet at the public *fêtes*[2] of Paris, and had been polished off by contact with the men and women he had encountered in his capacity of *garçon d'hôtel*, in a fifth-rate hotel near Montmartre. On the contrary, they rather expected of him the decencies and moralities that come from careful nurture, and these not being forthcoming, they had sent him to the *Bataillon d'Afrique*, where his eccentricities would be of no danger to the public.

So Grammont continued to suffer, over a period of several long months, and he was sufficiently cynical, owing to his short experience of life, to realize that the surgeon, who worked over him so constantly and solicitously, was not solely and entirely disinterested in his efforts to make him well. Grammont had no life to return to, that was the trouble. Everyone knew it. The surgeon knew it, and the orderlies knew it, and his comrades in the adjoining beds knew it—he had absolutely no future before him, and there was not much sense in trying to make him well enough to return to Paris, a hopeless cripple. He lay in hospital for several months, suffering greatly, but greatly patient. During that time, he received no letters, for there was no one to write to him. He was an *apache*,[3] he belonged to a criminal regiment, and he had no family anyhow, and his few friends,

2. Celebrations.

3. A Parisian thief.

tattooed all over the body like himself, were also members of the same regiment, and as such, unable to do much for him in civil life after the war. Such it is to be a *joyeux*, to belong to a regiment of criminals, and to have no family to speak of.

Grammont knew that it would be better for him to die, but he did not like to protest against this painful prolonging of his life. He was pretty well sick of life, but he had to submit to the kind treatment meted out to him, to twist his mouth into a wry smile when the *Directrice* asked him each day if he was not better, and to accept without wincing all the newest devices that the surgeon discovered for him. There was some sense in saving other people's lives, but there was no sense in saving his. But the surgeon, who was working for a reputation, worked hand in hand with the *Directrice* who wanted her hospital to make a reputation for saving the lives of the *grands blessés*. Grammont was the victim of circumstances, as usual, but it was all in his understanding of life, this being caught up in the ambitions of others, so he had to submit.

After about three months of torture, during which time he grew weaker and smelled worse every day, it finally dawned on the nurse that perhaps this life-saving business was not wholly desirable. If he got "well," in the mildest acceptation of the term, he would be pretty well disabled, and useless and good for nothing. And if he was never going to get well, for which the prospects seemed bright enough, why force him along through more weeks of suffering, just to try out new remedies? Society did not want him, and he had no place in it. Besides, he had done his share, in the trenches, in protecting its best traditions.

Then they all began to notice, suddenly, that in bed Grammont was displaying rather nice qualities, such as you would not expect from a *joyeux*, a social outcast. He appeared to be extremely patient, and while his face twisted up into knots of pain, most of the time, he did not cry out and disturb the ward as he might have done. This was nice and considerate, and other good traits were discovered too. He was not a nuisance, he was not exacting, he did not demand unreasonable things, or refuse to submit to unreasonable things, when these were demanded of him. In fact, he seemed to accept his pain as God-given, and with a fatalism which in some ways was rather admirable. He could not help smelling like that, for he was full of rubber drains and of gauze drains, and if the doctor was too busy to dress

his wounds that day, and so put him off till the next, it was not his fault for smelling so vilely. He did not raise any disturbance, nor make any complaint, on certain days when he seemed to be neglected. Any extra discomfort that he was obliged to bear, he bore stoically. Altogether, after some four months of this, it was discovered that Grammont had rather a remarkable character, a character which merited some sort of recognition. He seemed to have rather heroic qualities of endurance, of bravery, of discipline. Nor were they the heroic qualities that suddenly develop in a moment of exaltation, but on the contrary, they were developed by months of extreme agony, of extreme bodily pain. He could have been so disagreeable, had he chosen. And as he cared so little to have his life saved, his goodness could not have been due to that. It seemed that he was merely very decent, very considerate of others, and wanted to give as little trouble as he could, no matter what took place. Only he got thinner and weaker, and more and more gentle, and at last after five months of this, the *Directrice* was touched by his conduct and suggested that here was a case of heroism as well worthy of the *Croix de Guerre* as were the more spectacular movements on the battlefield. It took a few weeks longer, of gentle suggestion on her part, to convey this impression to the General, but at last the General entered into correspondence with the officers of the regiment to which Grammont belonged, and it then transpired that as a soldier Grammont had displayed the same qualities of consideration for others and of discipline, that he was now displaying in a hospital bed. Finally one day, the news came that Grammont was to be decorated. Everyone else in the ward, who deserved it, had been decorated long ago, naturally, for they had not belonged to the *Bataillon d'Afrique*. Their services had been recognized long ago. Now, however, after these many months of suffering, Grammont was to receive the *Croix de Guerre*. He was nearly dead by this time. When told the news, he smiled faintly. He did not seem to care. It seemed to make very little impression upon him. Yet it should have made an impression, for he was a convicted criminal, and it was a condescension that he should be so honoured at all. He had somehow won this honour, this token of forgiveness, by suffering so long, so uncomplainingly. However, a long delay took place, although finally his papers came, his citation, in which he was cited in the orders of the regiment as having done a very brave deed, under fire. He smiled a little at that. It had taken place so long ago, this

time when he had done the deed, received the wound that kept him suffering so long. It seemed so little worth while to acknowledge it now, after all these months, when he was just ready to leave.

Then more delay took place, and Grammont got weaker, and the orderlies said among themselves that if the General was ever going to decorate this man, that he had better hurry up. However, so long a time had passed that it did not much matter. Grammont was pleased with his citation. It seemed to make it all right for him, somehow. It seemed to give him standing among his fellow patients. The hideous tattoo marks on his arms and legs, chest and back, which proclaimed him an *apache*, which showed him such every time his wound was dressed, were about to be overlaid with a decoration for bravery upon the field of battle. But still the General did not come. Grammont grew very weak and feeble and his patience became exhausted. He held on as long as he could. So he died finally, after a long pull, just twenty minutes before the General arrived with his medals.

Paris,
27 June, 1916

An Incident

At the intersection of the rue du Bac and the Boulevard St. Germain[1] rises the statue of Claude Chappe, rising like a rock in the midst of the stream of traffic, and like a rock splitting the stream and diverting it into currents which flow east and west, north and south, smoothly and without collision.[2] In guiding the stream of traffic and directing its orderly flow, the statue of Claude Chappe is greatly assisted by the presence of an *agent de police*,[3] with a picturesque cape and a picturesque sword, and who controls the flow of vehicles with as much precision as a London policeman, although there are those who profess that a London policeman is the only one who understands the business. Before the war, when the omnibuses ran, the *agent de police* was always on duty; since the war, when the Paris omnibuses are all at the Front, carrying meat to the soldiers,[4] there are certain times during the day when the whole responsibility for traffic regulation falls upon the statue of Claude Chappe. It was at one of these times, when Claude Chappe was standing head in air as usual, and failed to regard the comings and goings of the street, that this incident occurred.

Down on the Quai, an officer of the French army stepped into a little victoria,[5] a shabby little *voiture de place*,[6] which trotted him up the rue du Bac and then essayed to take him along the Boulevard St. Germain to the

1. During the war, La Motte's apartment in Paris was near this intersection, on the rue des Saints-Peres, just above the Boulevard St. Germain.

2. This statue in Paris of Claude Chappe, inventor of the optical telegraph, was destroyed during World War II.

3. Policeman.

4. Buses and other vehicles were requisitioned for military use.

5. Horse-drawn carriage.

6. Horse-drawn taxicab.

Ministère de la Guerre.[7] Coming along the boulevard in the opposite direction, was a little lad of fifteen, bending low over the handle bars of a tricycle delivery wagon, the box of which contained enough kilos to have taxed a strong man or an old horse. Men are scarce in Paris, however, and the little delivery boy, who could not possibly have been available for the army for another three years, was doing a man's work, or a horse's work, as you please. The French are a thrifty race, and the possibilities being that the war will all be over before that time, it mattered little whether this particular boy developed a hernia, or tuberculosis, or any other malady which might unfit him for future military service. At present he was earning money for his *patron*,[8] which was all that really mattered. So the little boy on the tricycle, head down, ran squarely into the horse of the shabby victoria, conveying the French officer, and the *agent de police* was absent, and the statue of Claude Chappe stood, as usual, head in air.

Quite a *mêlée* ensued. The old horse, which should long ago have been in a butcher's shop, avoided the tricycle, with true French thrift, but stepped squarely upon the face of the little boy sprawling under its hoofs. Another hoof planted itself on the fingers of the lad's right hand. War itself could not have been more disastrous. The youth rose to his feet, screaming. The cabby cursed. A crowd collected, and the officer in the little carriage leaned back and twirled the ends of his neat moustache. The *agent de police*, who should have been on duty at the statue, arrived hastily from a nearby café. He always took two hours off for lunch, in good Parisian fashion, and he was obliged on this occasion to cut his lunch hour short by fifteen minutes. Everyone was frightfully annoyed, but no one was more annoyed than the officer in the cab, on his way to the Minister of War.

He was so annoyed, so bored, that he sat imperturbable, one arm lying negligently along the back of the seat, the fingers of the other hand caressing the Cross of the Legion of Honour,[9] upon his breast. His eyes rolled upwards, as if seeking the aeroplane which was not, at that moment, flying over Paris. The cabby got down from his seat, and with much vociferation called upon the officer to witness that it was not his fault. The crowd, who

7. Ministry of War.
8. Employer.
9. The highest military decoration in France.

had not witnessed the accident, crowded round the policeman, giving testimony to what they had not seen. The sobbing boy was led into a chemist's. Still the people did not disperse. They pressed round the cab, and began shouting to the disinterested officer. The officer who cared not where the old horse had stepped. The officer who continued to loll back against the shabby cushions, to look upward at the sky, to remain indifferent to the taximeter, which skipped briskly from eighty-five centimes to ninety-five centimes, and continued ticking on. Women crowded round the cab, regarding its occupant. Was this one who commanded their sons at the Front, who had therefore seen so much, been through so much, that the sight of a little boy stamped on meant nothing to him? Had he seen so much suffering *en gros*[10] that it meant nothing to him *en detail*?[11] Or was this his attitude to all suffering? Was this the Nation's attitude to the suffering of their sons? Or was this officer one who had never been to the Front, an *embusqué*,[12] one of the protected ones, who occupied soft snaps in the rear, safe places from which to draw their pay? The crowd increased every minute. They speculated volubly. They surrounded the cab, voicing their speculations. They finally became so unbearable that the officer's boredom vanished. His annoyance became such, his impatience at the delay became such that he slid down from the shabby cushions, and without paying his fare, disappeared in the direction of the *Ministère de la Guerre*.

10. In bulk or in large amounts.
11. In detail or in the particular.
12. A shirker or coward.

Esmeralda

People often say to me, you are quite morbid about the war, about your experiences in the War Zone. Surely, surely, in all those long months, you must have seen something that was not grim and horrible—something that was noble, or inspiring, or amusing, something that was human. Certainly, I say—I did—there was Esmeralda. So now I will tell you about Esmeralda, so that you won't think I have a quite morbid mind, unable to see anything but tragedy, unable to recognize nice things when I see them.

As I have told you, we were shut up in our field, with the wounded, with small politics and intrigues of sorts, with small gossipings, and above all, there was the noise of the guns. So much noise was there of that kind, that we all learned to distinguish the difference in sound between an *arrivé* and a *départ*. An *arrivé* being a shell that arrived from the enemy's side and fell near us, and a *départ* being a shell that departed from our side and arrived somewhere else. On the days of the *arrivés*, we jumped and started at each concussion, and wondered whether the next one would not arrive on us. The *départs* made much more noise, being fired from quite close, but we reassured ourselves, they will not fall on *us*. It is not *my* nose that is going to be removed.

Therefore, to offset the tension caused on the days of the *arrivés*, and to offset the relaxation of those days when we knew other people were feeling as we had felt yesterday—being comforted by the knowledge that it was ourselves who were firing—we bought Esmeralda. Esmeralda was a baby goat, young, soft and pliable, with stiff legs sticking out from her four corners, and a soft, yielding body to which they were attached. She came from

This story was not in the original edition of *The Backwash of War*. It was added to the new edition published in 1934.

a farm near by—they were glad to be rid of her for five francs, which we later discovered was an exorbitant sum. She had to be carried away from the farm—she refused to lead, chewing up her retaining string, and trying desperately hard to remain with her mother. So she had to be carried, and was dumped down in the middle of the dining-room floor, for the rest of us to admire. Her four stiff legs came down with a clack on the floor, and she clacked continually, ever after. As for her soft, yielding body, covered with soft gray hair, we found that body to vary in size, in the course of the day. In the morning, when we fished her out of the packing box where she spent her nights, that small, soft body was quite collapsed. Her spine stuck out on top, and her two hairy sides were separated from each other by only a few inches—only a few inches prevented their quite touching. She went off in the night considerably, did Esmeralda. But when released into the hospital enclosure, with a whole day before her to eat the tall, green winter grass, she swelled. Swelled sideways. Bulged amazingly. Became so bulged and distended by the amount of long grass that she took into herself, that her stiff legs refused to support her grandiose form, except at intervals. Therefore, some hours after her release from the packing box, she became unable to stand, and was obliged to sit down upon the cold grass and eat it away from herself, in a circle. After which, she gathered enough strength to move on and sit down in another spot. By nightfall she became completely waterlogged, and offered little resistance to being carried back to her box. The task of taking her back to bed usually fell to me—not because she was my goat, specially, but because I loved and defended her whenever she got into trouble.

She was always in trouble, was poor Esmeralda—first one thing and then another.

Elvira, the Belgian woman who came up from the village every morning to light our stoves and bring us jugs of hot water, used to let Esmeralda out of her box. Elvira was a nice woman, with red cheeks and a tender heart, and a husband with a horse and cart who went to market in the neighboring villages, and brought back all sorts of news and scandal. Elvira, primed with this news, used to retail it to us as she lit our stoves. When she came in with the coal bucket and an armful of wood, she stood and gossiped a while before she made up the fires. If she lingered too long, Esmeralda set up a great outcry. So much outcry that she waked up those others, the doctors and the *Directrice*, who were not obliged to rise as early as we did. On

the other hand, if Esmeralda was liberated before Elvira came in to us, she took advantage of it. There was always an open doorway and a warm room for her to enter. Particularly the dining-room.

Elvira always arrived every morning with bunches of flowers. Heaven knows where she got them, but she brought in a fresh lot every morning—big bunches of dahlias and nameless yellow flowers, all very stiff and awkward, but full of color. These she placed in a cartridge shell on our dining-room table—the big cartridge case of a seventy-five.[1] These gifts were quite a nuisance, for the cartridge case being tall, the tall flowers made it top-heavy and it was continually being upset. It was sweet and thoughtful of Elvira to bring us these flowers every morning—but a nuisance to mop up the water when the top-heavy lot fell over. Naturally, we could not tell Madame Elvira that these flowers were a bother—some of us even admired them, and spoke of Elvira's warm and generous heart, that matched her red cheeks. But those who admired them most—the flowers—and said wasn't it wonderful to have flowers like that, right under the guns, were generally absent when the tall vase upset.

But when we got Esmeralda, our little goat, things were different. She assumed that these daily offerings, fresh each morning on the dining-room table, were made to herself. It was a sight to warm your heart, on a winter's morning, to run across from the *baraque*[2] where Elvira's fire was only giving out smoke, into the cheery heat of the dining-room. And to find there soft, pliant Esmeralda, not yet distended, mounted on the breakfast table devouring those flowers. I used to say to her—Hurry, hurry, Esmeralda—be quick about it—some one will soon come in to pick you off the table. If you can't finish them all, at least destroy enough of them to save us trouble during the day, mopping up the water. Sometimes she got through—sometimes she didn't—she always started, anyway. But there was always some one who came in, furious, and pitched her out into the snow.

Esmeralda did other things which also caused annoyance. When the days grew short and the nights closed in early, she would return to the *baraque* of her own volition, without waiting to be fetched. But she did not seek her packing box—oh, no. It was our dining room–sitting room *baraque*

1. Seventy-five millimeter field gun.

2. An alternate spelling of *baracque*, wooden shack.

that attracted her, with its warmth and shelter. Its circle of easy chairs around the stove. Not easy chairs measured by any luxurious standard, but canvas chairs with arms, somewhat more comfortable than the hard, upright chairs upon which we sat at meals. Into a canvas armchair then, Esmeralda managed to raise herself—somehow she managed to get her fat, distended body into an armchair, and with closed eyes sat before the fire chewing her cud. Warm and cozy, she was a pleasant sight.

But do you think they liked it, some of those others? They dumped her right off, and said she was wet and muddy and quite ruined the chair.

Esmeralda's finish came about in this wise. You know, I have already told you that the various shacks or *baraques* are connected with one another by plank walks, about three feet wide. Down these narrow walks or *trottoirs* Esmeralda used to gallop, making a great clacking by reason of her rattling little hoofs. From time to time she would leave the *trottoir* and dash up the incline leading to this ward or that, trying to enter. She was sociable, full of confidence in herself, and quite sure some one wanted to speak to her and pat her. Nobody did, it seems. Therefore, at any time of the day, you could see Esmeralda being shoved away from the front door of a *baraque*. Sometimes the push was by hand, and sometimes by foot, but whichever it was, it was always resisted. Resisted by all the force of a small, obstinate body, turned tailwise towards the door, refusing to believe she was not welcome.

On the occasion of her undoing, Esmeralda was galloping down the *trottoir* one morning, making a fine clacking of little hoofs, tossing herself with little playful jumps, because of her extreme youth and inexperience. She encountered an obstacle, however. Her passage, her joyous, springing passage along the *trottoir*, was obstructed by two figures which completely occupied the three-foot wide plank walk. This left Esmeralda with no alternative but to run through them—it never occurred to her to leap from the walk and run around them. The obstacle was an august one, but Esmeralda was not aware of its augustness. It consisted of the *Directrice*, in her immaculate starched skirts, and of the great General commanding all that region. He was walking with short steps, keeping pace with the short steps of the *Directrice*, and they were talking over hospital affairs and quite unconscious of the clacking sound behind them. The General's long, thin legs were beautifully clad in shiny, high boots, spurred, but not dangerously so. Esmeralda beheld the obstacle in her path, but in her small goat mind

decided that it was not impassable. The wide, starched skirts of the *Directrice* were impassable, of course, but not so the tall, thin legs of the General, clad in shiny boots, spurred, but not dangerously so. What she failed to notice, however, was the General's sword, dangling down beside his tall, thin legs, making a third leg, as it were, thinner than the others. In her haste and inexperience, she tried to dash through the two recognizable legs. The third, thin leg, dangling, she did not see. There was an awful crash on the *trottoir*. A General of France fell to the ground.

That evening, acting upon orders, I carried Esmeralda down to the laundry, before the Belgian women went home for the night.

"Will one of you accept a small goat?" I asked.

Two days later, in the rain, I went down to the laundry again. I felt very anxious about Esmeralda.

"You to whom I have given my goat," I inquired, "my precious, beloved little goat—is it well with her, my little pet?"

"A thousand thanks, Mademoiselle—a thousand thanks. Last evening we had a delicious meal."

War Essays by Ellen N. La Motte

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An American Nurse in Paris

My connection as a nurse with the American Ambulance of Paris began on November 7. I had come over from New York in response to a cable from a friend in Paris, to whom I had written asking if there was any work that I could do. The cryptic message, "Come—American Ambulance," suggested nothing to my mind except service on the battlefield, gathering in the wounded on stretchers, and conveying them to a waiting ambulance. A modern hospital as large and almost as well equipped as the Johns Hopkins[1] (*almost*, I say) was the last thing that had occurred to me. My imagination had run riot on the hardships of war, the suffering, the discomforts, the privation. I fancied myself working night and day,—eighteen-hour and twenty-four-hour stretches—worse even than that—and doing without food, sleep and warmth.

Instead, I found myself on comfortable ten-hour duty, with two hours off a day, and a half day once a week, in a steam-heated, electric-lighted building, with excellent food and a handful of patients. Somewhere off, outside of Paris, there is hell let loose, and daily we hear tales of wounded men lying in hundreds in the market-place of some little French village, neglected and uncared for; but all that is another story.

The American Ambulance of Paris (the French word *ambulance* signifies a military hospital) is one of the chain of French military hospitals, though supported by American capital. It owes its existence to Dr. Charles Du Bouchet, an American who lives in France and is one of the foremost surgeons of Paris.

This essay appeared in the July 10, 1915, issue of *The Survey: A Journal of Constructive Philanthropy*, published in New York City.

1. La Motte had trained and worked at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore.

It is the one place in France where Americans can offer their services and have them accepted,[2] where laymen and professionals, blundering or efficient, can work off their sympathies, their desire to help, or their desire to "see things," with no questions asked as to impelling motives. True, the motives reveal themselves pretty clearly after a short time, and much bombastic bluff is "called," as well as many fine and true natures displayed, and people are shown up generally in their true colors.

With many misgivings I went in to breakfast that first day on duty (we go on duty at 8 a.m.) and found myself in an enormous basement dining-room, filled with long trestle tables, round which were ranged little iron chairs such as are used in the cafés and parks. The first impression was that of the *grande finale* of a comic opera, where the costumes of the entire show are gathered together in a kaleidoscopic climax.

There were dozens of nurses and dozens of auxiliaries or untrained nurses, each one habited as seemed best to her. There were nurses of every nationality, American, English, French, Swiss, Russian, each one in the uniform of her school, or such adaptation of her uniform as she happened to fancy. Caps of all sorts and sizes, the flowing white veils of the French Red Cross, the somber black or blue veils of the English and Swiss nurses, dresses of white, blue, pink, and even of green, and red crosses everywhere—on sleeves, aprons, caps—red crosses of every size imaginable.

Breakfast consisted of oatmeal porridge, boiled eggs and war bread, for there is but one kind of bread in Paris just now, ration bread, like that served to the troops. After breakfast I was taken to a ward, and here saw for the first time wounded soldiers. All were convalescent, swathed in neat bandages, and looking very contented and well cared for. We served breakfast to them, big bowls of *café au lait*, and giant chunks of bread which they dipped in their coffee and ate with great relish. After that, cigarettes all round, the patients lying in bed and smoking with keen enjoyment. Only when the little *piou-piou*[3] cannot smoke do we become alarmed over him!

In the course of that first morning I broke a soap-dish; to replace it, I was obliged to have written orders from three people, and to walk about a mile,

2. It was difficult for Americans to find volunteer positions early in the war because of their country's neutrality.

3. Slang for a common French soldier.

from one department to another, till I finally found some one authorized to give me a new one. That same day, a patient broke the cigarette tray, with which each bedside table is provided; to get a new cigarette tray I needed no order. I simply went to a cupboard and helped myself from a generous supply. After all, the importance of things is relative.

Later in the day, I was placed in charge of a small ward on the third floor, which had just been furnished and opened to receive patients. Here for the first time, I saw wounded soldiers brought in from the front. Four of them were able to walk, being less seriously injured; they had been divested of their uniforms downstairs, and bathed by the bath steward. The other four were carried in on stretchers, just as they had been taken from the ambulances. Each hospital sends its ambulances to meet the trains, and each snatches whatever it can obtain in the way of patients.[4] These four men were badly injured, and were carried into the ward, dirty, muddy, bloody little heaps of humanity, making no moan or outcry. We undressed them, pulling off their heavy blue overcoats gently, drawing off their little red trousers, stiff with mud and blood, and carefully preserving their medals of identification which each soldier wears round his neck on a string.

These men had been in the trenches for weeks, never taking their clothes off during that time, and the earth seemed ground into their very marrow. There was scarcely a murmur as we undressed them, yet each man was grievously wounded, his face contorted with pain and suffering. Those we received that day had received the first or emergency dressings some four or five days before and they were foul beyond description.[5]

Later, when they were bathed and clean, the doctor came in and dressed their wounds, and then I saw the awful mutilation wrought by bullet and shrapnel. One man had a shattered leg, swollen and gangrenous; another a hand with the palm torn off, and horribly infected; another had been struck in the back by a piece of bursting shrapnel, which had penetrated the sacrum and produced a fæcal fistula; he had been lying for a month in a field hospital, and was emaciated and worn to a skeleton, and filthy beyond words to describe.

4. Wounded soldiers were evacuated to military hospitals in Paris and elsewhere.

5. They had been treated at a first-aid station before being evacuated.

Without exception, all wounds are infected, due to the long delay before the patient can be placed under treatment—a delay of days, or a week or even more, during which time he lies on the battlefield, or in some railway station waiting for transportation to a base hospital. Besides the ordinary infections, there are many caused by the gas bacillus, which is usually a fatal complication; that caused by the bacillus pyocyaneus, which produces a curious grass green pus, and which, while not usually fatal, causes a prolonged and exhausting drain upon the vitality.

At first, tetanus was a frequent and fatal complication, but it is now practically eliminated through the administration of anti-tetanus serum to each patient immediately upon admission. It is thus not so much the character of the wounds, terrible as these may be, but the resultant infections that lead to such disastrous consequences, and such serious and deforming mutilation.

The routine treatment after admission is a bath, a bowl of soup with an egg in it, cigarettes, and a dose of anti-tetanus serum. After this, the first dressings are made, and the patient falls to sleep, the sleep of sheer exhaustion. They seem to sleep for days, these little soldiers of France, utterly worn out and exhausted as they are when they arrive. Urgent cases are operated upon at once; less urgent ones first have their X-ray photographs taken, and then are sent to the operating-room. From that time on it becomes a question of ordinary surgical nursing, with daily dressings of these frightful wounds.

I was struck with the fortitude of these men, their patience, their ability to stand suffering, an ability to bear pain that exceeded anything I had ever known in my previous experience. This is probably due to the fact that they are all young men physically fit, and selected because of this fitness. They are unlike the usual run of patients in a city hospital, who come as a rule from the worn-out working classes, and are below par even when in so-called health. These little soldiers are all young, strong, able-bodied and in the prime of life.

The number of wounded men able to return to the army is very small. The majority of them are in for a prolonged and tedious convalescence, even after discharge, while a great proportion are crippled or mutilated for life.

One thing is impressed strongly upon the mind when working in the American ambulance, and that is the wastefulness of the institution, for the

ambulance is an institution, rather than a war hospital, and the spirit of war, and the hardships of war are psychologically and practically as far removed from it as if they did not exist. The waste is manifest on all sides, waste of time, energy, service, effort, money. "The American way," say the French people with an amused shrug, and even in the remote Latin Quarter rumors have penetrated as to the lavish scale on which things are done.

In the first place, the great rush of patients to Paris has now stopped. In September, when the battle-line was but fifteen miles from the city, the ambulances were able to go out to the battlefields and bring the wounded back in scores.[6] Now, since the retreat, other hospitals nearer the base of operations are receiving the wounded, and it is said that at the present time there are over 30,000 empty beds in Paris. The ambulance receives twenty patients a week now, as compared to twenty a day two months ago.

And to care for a total of less than 350 patients, at least one-third of whom are convalescent or walking about, there is, in addition to the surgeons, a staff of 95 graduate nurses, about 150 auxiliary or untrained nurses, and dozens of orderlies. The attendants outnumber the wounded nearly two to one. In addition to this staff, there is the paid service of the dining-rooms and kitchens, and the women who clean the wards and corridors. There are also some 70 auxiliaries in the bandage and supply rooms, where the surgical supplies are made, and others scattered about in different departments. Except for the servants, all this is volunteer service.

There is an abundance, a superfluity, of everything. Linen, so that one can change the beds throughout every day; drugs, surgical supplies, gauze, all dealt out with a much more lavish hand than is ever permitted in a big city hospital. True, we hear rumors that we must economize in using the adhesive plaster, as there is no more to be had, but we cannot and do not believe such rumors.

English nurses come in from the front from time to time and tell us of the conditions in the field hospitals, where the patients are brought in by the hundreds, day after day. There is no such thing as a clean sheet there; patients may lie on a blood-stained one for weeks, glad indeed to be lifted off the straw of some convent floor, if indeed the stone floor be covered with

6. The First Battle of the Marne (September 6–12, 1914) was fought near Paris and ended in a German retreat.

straw at all. They tell us tales of the wounded outnumbering the nurses two hundred to one, and it makes us frantic to think that there is no equalization of material and of service, that there should be such a banking up in one place, and such desperate dearth in another.

One of the most interesting features of the American ambulance is its personnel, the auxiliaries and the orderlies. As I said before, the ambulance is the clearing-house for sentiment, and any man or woman who expresses a wish to care for the wounded is at once taken on in some capacity or other, regardless of the need for their services, or their fitness or ability to perform the work. These auxiliaries include society women of the American colony in Paris, young society girls gathering experiences which will tell well in next year's ball-rooms, artists, painters, opera singers, writers, a few members of the French nobility, and others of a nondescript variety. Nearly all are dressed in the becoming white gowns of the French Red Cross, and a few are pearled and jewelled, rouged and scented till they are quite adorable. Some are animated by a genuine desire to be of service, others by nothing more lofty than a craving for new sensations, or for occupation since the normal life of their class is for the moment suspended.

This system floods the institution with a mass of unskilled labor, some of which is useful, much superfluous, and some a positive menace to the patients themselves. For the auxiliaries are seldom long content with the humble tasks they are capable of performing, such as emptying vessels, cleaning dressing basins, dusting bedside tables, running errands, and the like. Most of them aspire to such work as doing surgical dressings. But since the technical work is beyond them, the result is an idle person with no occupation.

One auxiliary settled her problem very satisfactorily. She explained that she was far in arrears with her correspondence, and that this opportunity to care for the wounded offered an ideal chance to catch up with it; she sat peacefully in the ward writing endless letters most of the day! When the doctor came to do dressings, however, she became alert—she at once drew up a chair and seated herself comfortably to watch each case! At the end of three weeks this little lady had acquired enough experience, plus pull, to be sent to the front. For the French standard of nursing is low.

There was another rather beautiful young woman, blessed with all the attributes of charm and sunshine, whom I found trying to move a desper-

ately injured man from his bed to a stretcher. She wished to do this in order to make his bed properly, which, she explained, could not be done while he was in it. This man had a serious wound in his leg—the popliteal artery, the great artery at the back of the knee, lying exposed. His life depended upon his being kept absolutely motionless, for so severe was the infection and so necrotic the tissues that the artery might burst at any moment. He lay with a tourniquet tied loosely above his knee, for instant use in emergency. This young woman, however, was in temporary charge of the ward, and had I not by chance appeared upon the scene, she would undoubtedly have dragged the patient from his bed to the stretcher, assisted by two stalwart soldiers whom she had commandeered for the purpose.

The zeal with which these inexperienced ones set about their work is often amusing. A story is told of one auxiliary, who, when asked how a certain patient was getting along, replied with enthusiasm: "Oh, very well, indeed! His temperature is getting a little higher every day!" And there is another story of an English Tommy,[7] one of the few British soldiers in the hospital, who after waiting till his patience was exhausted, finally exclaimed, "Here, tell one of them countesses to bring me my broth! I've waited half-an-hour already!"

A few days ago I was visiting one of the hotels on the Champs Elysées, now transformed into an English ambulance, supported by contributions from the English. The doctor in charge spoke in high praise of the American institution, its complete equipment, lavish funds, and the opportunity for fine work. The concluding words, however, were significant. "Your nursing standards are very low. Your patients are not properly cared for." I protested instantly.

"But we have ninety-five graduate nurses!"

"Yes, perhaps you have," was the terse rejoinder, "but their work is hindered at every step. Your whole nursing standard is dragged down to the level of the inefficient, who are given duties and responsibilities they are totally unfitted for. We believe our patients to be worthy of the most skilled nursing that can be given, and they are only cared for by the best nurses we can obtain, neither more nor less than we need. No war hospital can be run on a basis of efficiency or economy if a large or any portion of the nursing

7. Slang for a common British soldier.

care is entrusted to incapable hands. We do not trust our wounded to scented, painted ladies, or scented, painted men."

This was a severe arraignment, delivered with the British arrogance that is so irritating, yet the sting lay in its truth. The nursing standards of America are high, if not higher than English standards, and our institutions rank with, or outrank, theirs.

I had almost forgotten the orderlies! A few of them are paid, but the great majority volunteer their services. At first glance it seems that the whole Latin Quarter has emptied itself into the ambulance, so numerous are the artists and musicians. Later on, a good leaven of French aristocracy is observed and one or two American millionaires or near-millionaires—it amounts to the same thing provided they have francs enough to tip the little scrubwomen for doing certain of their disagreeable tasks.

As with the auxiliaries, so with the orderlies; some of them perform their duties well and faithfully, always allowing for lack of experience, and the fact that they are not trained to observe and recognize that which to the professional eye is most apparent. Again, one is struck by the excessive number of them; there are so many that they have time to sit about and play cards with the patients, or hang about the operating room, watching operations. One little artist orderly was very keen on that, and managed to see a good many in the course of a day. All these people, of course, are given good square meals, in exchange for as much or as little work as they happen to do.

The French orderlies are either too old or too young for military service, and Americans are not eligible for the French army. There were several young Englishmen about and to one I put the question boldly:

"Why don't you fight instead of playing orderly? It seems much more of a man's part!"

"I'm not sufficiently patriotic to fight," came the ingenuous reply. "One country is as good as another to me. But as I'm a humanitarian, I cannot sit still and do nothing." He was a good orderly, a hard and willing worker, always ready to lend a hand.

"And how do you happen to be here?" I asked still another, an American who looked very handsome in his white clothes and neat little cap. He was constantly talking about how much he admired and pitied the "dear, brave fellows" and would do anything for them. His answer surprised me, it warmed my heart, the honest spirit of it.

"My butler," he said, "was killed in the war. Then one of my gardeners was killed, and another wounded. Among the women servants, half had husbands or relatives at the front, and it was all so terrible, their grief and awful loss, it all came home to me so that I could stand it no longer. I had given all the money I could, naturally, but I felt that that was not enough—I must give myself, render some personal service, no matter how small and menial, to these brave fellows who are giving their all to France!"

It was good to hear, and I glowed at the thought of this rich man, and what it must mean to him to perform such work. Every morning he came on duty with flowers for the "dear boys," and made rounds among them, inquiring what he could do to help the poor chaps. True, he was rather sentimental, and a trifle absent-minded when it came to doing the few little things I suggested, but I am so inclined to trust brave words.

As the days went by, however, I began to long for a few manifestations of such service—for deeds as well as words. Being by this time rather doubtful of the artistic temperament and its fleeting memory, I sought to keep my faith in him by suggesting a few little duties. By a curious coincidence, I finally saw that he always managed to avoid these little tasks, and then my suspicion became aroused. Soon it resolved itself into a conversation as follows:

"Good morning! And how are the dear boys today?"

"They'll be all right as soon as their water bottles are filled."

"Their water bottles? Oh, yes, of course!"

Each patient has a bottle of sterile water on the table beside his bed, and twice a day these bottles are collected in an iron bottle-basket, and filled with fresh water from the sterilizer on the floor below. The task is not a difficult one, but the sterilizer is some distance away, and the basket, when the bottles are full, is rather heavy.

"By the way," he continued, "wouldn't that chap over there like a few roses?"

"He would like a drink far more," I replied uncompromisingly.

"How about that dear fellow over there—wouldn't he like a grapefruit, fixed with a little sherry?"

"Pining for a drink at the moment, however,—needs it far more."

"Oh, all right," came the crestfallen reply, "I'll get the basket."

Later, I filled the water bottles myself.

One day, however, the climax came. Heretofore my friend had evaded his duties, but had never refused outright to follow directions. On this occasion, there was a certain difficult dressing to be done which fell to the nurses. It took two people to do the work, one to hold the irrigating can in position and keep the dressing basin in place, the other to irrigate the wound. It was not a pleasant task, and as one of the nurses was absent, I asked the orderly if he would kindly hold the irrigator.

"I'd do anything I could for the dear fellow," he began, "but I really can't do that, it's too disagreeable."

"But the man's an ill man," I exclaimed, "and it takes two people to do this dressing—I certainly shouldn't ask you if I could manage it alone."

"It's very disagreeable," he returned. "I really must refuse."

Later on, when the dressing was safely over, he returned to the ward, and going up to the patient in question, presented him with a photograph of a beautiful old Norman chateau, remarking, "*This* is where your orderly lives!"

Every one goes to tea at the ambulance, every one who can get off duty. Every day between three and four, the ladies of the committee serve tea in a little room next the dining-room, and delicious buns and muffins and cake go with it. Here the whole hospital relaxes itself for a few moments, the sheep and the goats mix freely, the lion and the lamb lie down together. Auxiliaries, orderlies, nurses and a sprinkling of doctors hand each other cups of tea, and put down each other's empty cups with much solicitude and kindliness. It is a refreshing period, but as I seldom drink tea, I have been down only once or twice.

On the day of my unfortunate experience with my orderly, I met him in the corridor on his way downstairs and passed him without speaking. I was furious and disgusted with him, and furious and disgusted with myself for being such a bad reader of character. He, however, was all for peace. He stopped before me and exclaimed:

"Do come down to tea! Surely you're coming down? Why, one meets all the smartest people in Paris down at tea!"

Under Shell-Fire at Dunkirk

I

We arrived in Dunkirk the evening of the twentieth of June, after a long ten-hour trip from Paris,—a journey which in normal times can be accomplished in three.[1] Dunkirk is in the "war zone" and ranks as a fortified town of the first class, and no one is permitted to enter it without a special military permit, an *autorisation spéciale* issued by the commander of that sector. However, as we were to join a field hospital "somewhere in Belgium," and our permits had been forwarded to us in Paris, we had no difficulty in getting there. On alighting from the train, we were not permitted to pass through the station till all our papers had been carefully examined,—our passports and our safe-conducts from the Paris police, as well as our military passes; but all were in order, and after a careful scrutiny we were allowed to go through the gates. The first sensation on entering the war zone is that of being locked in. Only through the most rigid formalities had we been able to enter; only through the same formalities would we be permitted to leave. Individual liberty was gone; we were not free to come and go how and where we liked, but, under observation in the zone of the armies, we must share with the armies whatever fate had in store. It was a curious feeling, this sense of restriction, and one not altogether pleasant. The longer one stays in the military areas, the more this sense of being a prisoner at large weighs upon one.

B. met us at the station with a motor, and drove us rapidly through the town to Malo, a small suburb lying just outside the fortifications. Here, at

This essay appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* in November 1915.

1. Dunkirk is located on the coast of northern France, near the Belgian border.

a clean little hotel, we found comfortable rooms overlooking the town, and were told that we should have to wait here several days till the hospital in Belgium was ready for us.

The next day we explored Dunkirk, anxious to see this seaport which during the winter had several times been bombarded by long-range German guns,—siege guns fired from beyond Dixmude, twenty-two miles away. These, the most formidable and powerful cannon that the enemy possesses, fire projectiles which rise seven miles in the air before they fall to earth, each shell a ton of devastating steel.[2] Off somewhere in the German lines, these Dunkirk guns are buried in the ground, roofed over by concrete twelve feet thick, surmounted by armor plate; not yet have they been found and silenced. Yet, under the shadow of this constant menace, life in the little town seemed to go on unchanged. The streets were filled with soldiers, and in the roadways gray high-powered military motors and great rumbling transports were coming and going in incessant streams. Here and there were shattered houses, razed to their foundations, but only here and there.

Shops were open and business thriving; the streets were full of civilians going about their daily tasks, unheeding, apparently, the threatening danger. Confidence was restored; there had been no bombardment for six weeks—had not the great guns been found and silenced by the Allies? Yet apart from the few ruined houses—and not many at that—there were constant evidences of precaution. Across the panes of nearly every window strips of paper had been pasted, strips four inches wide, running diagonally from corner to corner across the glass, to reduce the shock of concussion. In the centre of the town stood the Hôtel de Ville,[3] the windows on two floors completely blocked by sandbags; and sandbags, or bags full of ashes, lay before many a cellar window. Here and there on the fronts of certain houses great notices were posted, printed in glaring letters of red upon white backgrounds, "Refuge en cas d'alerte,"[4] showing where cellars were available to which refugees might fly. Yet it was all over, the danger. Over long ago. The *affiches*[5] were torn, flapping from the walls; many of the sandbags

2. Dunkirk had been repeatedly shelled by German artillery guns located over twenty miles away, in an unprecedented use of long-range artillery,

3. City hall.

4. Emergency shelter.

5. Posters.

had holes in them, letting out streams of scattering sand or grimy ashes, which heedless pedestrians kicked along the footway. People strolled about unconcernedly, and normal life and normal interests were reasserting themselves, just as normal life in the individual reasserts itself after intense suffering and pain. Whatever the horror of six weeks ago, it was all over now. The Allies had found and silenced the great guns.

In the harbor, ships were coming and going; along the piers, dozens of fishermen had cast their nets, bringing in good catches of sardines, sole, and plaice, while knots of idle, amused soldiers loitered about each net, winding in the reels, and commenting volubly upon each haul. It was a day of glorious sunshine, of busy, homely occupation. As the afternoon advanced, we could hear guns rolling in the distance; the clear air, the absolute stillness, brought the thunder down from Nieuport, from that "Front" off beyond on the vague horizon.[6] Somewhere over there was "war," but here was harmony, tranquility, and peace. Later, we became aware that certain guns seemed to punctuate themselves upon our consciousness, certain deeper, more sinister *br-r-r-o-o-o-ms*, which, by the watch, came rolling to us at three-minute intervals,—but all so remote, so far away! We were conscious only of the golden, fading sunlight, the sweet sea wind, the glittering, sparkling water. We tried to imagine submarines in this North Sea, but failed. After the fever, the rush, the gossip and intrigue of Paris, this war zone seemed restfulness and peace. So we went to bed that night, windburned and sleepy, wishing that the hospital might be ready for us soon. This comfort and idleness might soon become a bore.

II

Next morning, the twenty-second of June, we were awakened by a terrific explosion. An *avion Boche*[7] had dropped a bomb just outside our windows! Instantly anti-aircraft guns began firing, and I sprang from my bed to see French and English aeroplanes rising, one by one, from the aerodrome in Dunkirk, and flying straight and menacing in pursuit. It was very light, although the sun had not yet risen; quarter to three by my watch. At the

6. The coastal Belgian town of Nieuwpoort, roughly twenty miles northeast of Dunkirk, lay along the Western Front, the main theater of fighting during the war.

7. German airplane.

window next mine I saw a disheveled head where the English nurse, W., was peering out, her round blue eyes agog with interest and excitement. I shouted to her, "Let's go out on the beach," and in return came a cheery "Right-O! Just as soon as I slip on my mac."

A moment later we met in the corridor. She was clad in a yellow raincoat, beneath which appeared a copious expanse of blue pajamas, and bare feet shod in green slippers. Her curly hair hung in disordered braids down her back. I checked an instinctive remark about her looking the figure of fun, for I suddenly recollected my own costume—purple pajamas under a brown dressing-gown. Doors were opening all along the halls, and curious, half-dressed figures were emerging—after all, W. and I looked no different from the rest; it was merely a case of different arrangements of color schemes, that was all. On the floor below we met Mrs. A., one of our unit. She called to us as we sped past, "It's the beginning of a bombardment, isn't it?" but we flew on. It seems a bombardment is always preceded by the visit of a scouting Taube,[8] which either by smoke-bomb or by wireless gives the range to these distant guns.

There were hundreds of people on the beach: French soldiers, who apparently slept in their clothes, for they were fully dressed and looked as crumpled as in the day time; English Tommies,[9] who, like ourselves, wore bath-gowns over pajamas and showed other signs of a hasty toilet.[10] Bare feet and slippered feet were everywhere. Every moment the crowd increased, yet we excited no more attention in our scanty garments than we should have, fully dressed, in the Rue de la Paix![11] Mingling with these thousands upon the sands, we evoked neither surprise nor comment; all attention was centred upon the direction in which the Taube had disappeared, or upon the Allies' aeroplanes which sped low overhead in pursuit. Quite black the machines looked in that early light, for the sun had not yet risen to reflect itself upon the luminous wings.

Men, women, and children now began to flock out from the town, an ever-increasing stream, carrying bundles, leading mongrel dogs, pushing

8. A type of German airplane.
9. Slang for British soldiers.
10. Dressing and grooming.
11. A fashionable shopping street in Paris.

perambulators[12] laden with household possessions: a silent, anxious, restless crowd, seeking safety on the wide sands. Our gowns flapped in the fresh dawn breeze, and we became suddenly conscious of the cold sand which trickled in over the tops of our slippers. There was nothing more to be seen, so we returned to the hotel.

At the head of the stairs Mrs. A. met us and asked us in for tea, strong tea, without milk or sugar, which she had prepared during our absence. She dispensed it in great breakfast coffee bowls, an after-dinner coffee cup, and the sugar basin. A doctor from a neighboring hospital was also there, clad in informal garments like our own. We noticed that between gulps of tea he kept looking at his wrist-watch; he was an old campaigner and had seen bombardments before. Suddenly we were startled by a deafening explosion, an appalling, rending crash—the earth shook, the hotel rocked! We sprang to the balcony, and saw a dense column of smoke rising from the town, rising somewhere from the midst of those peaceful, red-tiled roofs that were just catching the first rays of the rising sun. A great seventeen-inch shell, fired by a gun twenty-two miles away, had burst somewhere among those homes. Slowly the smoke rose and spread into the sky, the glorious sky of a June dawn. Not a word was spoken. The doctor glanced at his watch—3.15 a.m. We waited silently on the balcony. Five minutes later another shell plunged downwards with a roar. Another cloud of smoke marked its bursting. Then two ambulances, from the garage back of the hotel, dashed along the highroad into the town. Two more shells, and then a pause. In all, four shells at five-minute intervals, then a rest of forty minutes for the guns to cool.

Mrs. A. gave the orders. "Go to bed," she commanded. "Get what sleep you can, till they begin again. After all, it's practically three o'clock in the morning and we shall have a whole day of this." She, too, was an old campaigner, having been through a week's bombardment of Poperingue.[13] So we went upstairs and back to bed.

This was my first experience of shellfire, and as yet I did not know enough to be afraid. So far, it was only overwhelmingly interesting and

12. Baby carriages.

13. The Belgian town of Poperinghe lay near the field hospital where La Motte was headed.

exciting, and I was conscious of extreme regret that the light was not yet strong enough for photographs. The shells were passing completely over us, and falling a mile away. There was nothing to fear.

I was just falling asleep in obedience to instructions, when at five o'clock there came another tremendous crash. I dashed to the window to see the dense smoke rising in the air, rolling upward in great black billows, which a moment later were succeeded by tongues of fire. The flames mounted higher and higher, sinking for a moment only to leap upwards again in fierce, increasing waves. We shouted to some Tommies passing below, to know what had been struck. Some said an oil-tank, others a tobacco factory, still others a jute works.[14] One of them called up gayly, "I say! This is part of their atrocities—waking us up so early in the morning!" As each shell struck, another ambulance dashed along the highroad in a cloud of dust. Never an instant's hesitation on the part of these young fellows, English and American. They drove at top speed into the heart of the stricken town, into the midst of falling walls and splintering steel. It was superb courage.

I dressed between shells: washing, somewhat superficially, between explosions, trying to arrange my hair and look out of the window at the same time. Then we all hurried down to the little open square in front of the hotel, and hailed the ambulance men as they returned, asking for news. Such a spirit of *camaraderie* as there was among us all, French and English soldiers, the ambulance men, townspeople, and ourselves! We leaned in at the window of a little café where a lot of the men were breakfasting, and they answered our questions willingly and readily, laying down their big bowls of coffee to give us details of the havoc. The first shell had pitched upon the Place Jean Bart, killing five people outright. It tore a great hole eight feet deep at the base of the statue of the famous admiral, but Jean Bart himself is standing unscathed, still waving his sword aloft. The wounded were all taken to a hospital in Malo.

While we were talking, two boys approached, each carrying a large canvas sack, filled with the fragments of a shell that had pitched down on the sand dunes, a few hundred yards from the hotel. Some one shouted, "Souvenirs! Souvenirs!" and in a moment the two youths were surrounded by a

14. Factory for processing jute, used for making rope, burlap, and other products.

curious, lively group, intent on bartering cigarettes and *sous*[15] for these pieces of jagged steel, with fierce cutting edges. They were still warm, these terrible trophies, and had been red hot when the thrifty lads had first gathered them in.

At eight o'clock, Mrs. A. called us in to breakfast, which she gave us in a little room adjoining the kitchen. She had closed the heavy outside wooden shutters, by way of precaution, and as she poured out the steaming coffee, she regaled us with the news. The second shell had burst five hundred yards to the rear of the hotel, injuring four men and a woman. It was *triste*,[16] that, very *triste*, she remarked conversationally. Then for the first time we suddenly realized our position. Shells were pitching over and behind us; we were in the direct line of fire, although not the object of attack. The *sales Boches*,[17] continued Mrs. A., had got the range exactly. Even yet, as we continued to drink our coffee in the semi-darkness of the little dining-room, we had no sense of fear. It was all merely an intensely interesting, an intensely exciting experience, but still, for all that, something quite apart from, something totally beyond, our hitherto sheltered lives.

III

The guns had been silent for an hour, and we were making plans for the day. Y. had business in Calais, and had obtained her military permit to go there the evening before. I offered to accompany her to the station. Then Mrs. A. announced that she was going to the docks to bring some hospital supplies, just arrived from England, to a place of safety. She wished to remove them from the docks to a little village outside the danger zone, and offered to give Y. and me a lift into town. I was filled with an overwhelming curiosity to see the town, to know what damage had been caused by these tremendous shells. A huge *camion* or motor-truck drove up to the door; we climbed aboard, and then started at breakneck speed for the town. Mrs. A. and Y. were comfortably installed on the driver's seat, but I, bouncing about on the floor behind, saw no object in this frantic pace. At the gates a sentry stopped us and examined our papers, and we flew on again. Suddenly I realized, in

15. Cash.
16. Sad.
17. Dirty Germans.

a flash, that we were entering the town, not because the bombardment was over, but between intervals of bombardment! A sickening sense of fear, of nervous dread, passed over me.

We sped through the Place Jean Bart, so prosperous and busy the day before, now a scene of desolation and ruin. Not a whole pane of glass in any window of the square; there were jagged holes in many roofs, and the façades of many houses presented huge, jagged gashes in the masonry, where a cobblestone or piece of steel had torn a giant rent. The motor swerved down a side street, to avoid a street rendered impassable by a collapsed house that blocked the roadway. A few venturesome townsfolk gingerly picked their way through the litter of glass and débris, but, for the most part, the town seemed deserted. For the first time I saw war in the concrete, saw the havoc wrought by those awful guns, contrasted the peaceful workaday life of yesterday with this sunlit, silent, stricken scene of to-day. A feeling of cold terror passed over me. We were in Dunkirk, not after a bombardment, but between intervals of a bombardment! We were in Dunkirk while the great guns were cooling! This long pause between periods of shelling did not indicate that they had been found and silenced—our nerves were merely being racked by this long pause, this long and irregular interval between shells!

Finally we arrived at the docks, after passing ruined houses that had been destroyed to their foundations, not one brick standing upon another. Where each shell had pitched, destruction utterly. Shells of smaller calibre tear holes in buildings. These monster *obus*, dropping from the sky, crush buildings to the earth. Mrs. A. left us at the docks, for we could not enter with her, having no military permits. She directed us to the station, and Y. and I made our way together along the rough, cobbled, sunny streets. Y. talked of what she would do in Calais, the train by which she would return. I tried to listen, but that horrible fear gripped my heart. They would begin again, those awful guns! They would begin again before I could make my way back to Malo! I should be alone in the midst of it. Alone, in the midst of a town under fire by the most fearful guns the Germans possessed! Y., ever cheerful, spoke as if it were all over, of the people in Calais she intended to see. So we walked along to the station under a sweltering June sun.

We were approaching the station, a bare, meagre little brick building, with a hot open square in front of it, and were making our way across this

sunny *place*,[18] when suddenly a terrible roar burst upon us. Just behind the station, three hundred yards away, a shell fell with [an] appalling, rending crash! The bombardment had begun.

We stood still, looking in all directions for a place of safety, for one of those flapping signs, "Refuge en cas d'alerte," that we had passed in other parts of the town. None were to be seen. We had lost our bearings, and knew not where to turn. Y. indicated the station with a nod. "Well, not *there*, at all events," she remarked significantly. "Railways are always a target." As we paused, high-powered military motors shot past us, the occupants waving to us to fly. In the distance, men dashed along the streets at full speed, running for their lives. They had an objective: they knew where they were going, what shelter they were seeking, where to run. But we were helpless. The surrounding houses were shattered and blank, giving no signs of life, of aid, of assistance. We dared not run, we did not know where to run. Obviously not toward the little station, but where? Danger was everywhere, in the open spaces, under the walls of houses. There was no one to direct us. A donkey-cart trotted by in the distance, the owner frantically beating the little animal with a whip. Its tiny feet fairly twinkled over the cobblestones, yet for all that its progress seemed slow. Still, it was being lashed onward to some place of refuge, of security—driven in some definite direction.

Again a military motor flew by, and again the occupants waved to us to run. Yes, that was it, run—but where? The waving arms indicated the wide horizon—we saw before us only blank, deserted streets. We made our way down a narrow alley between shuttered houses, and presently found ourselves by the bank of a canal. There was a curious sense of safety in the proximity of water, yet a motor-boat sped along the canal, the men on it shouting to us to fly. To fly—where? And after all, where could our short flight carry us? Out of range of those awful shells, that traveled twenty-two miles in a few seconds? As well wait here as a few hundred feet away. Why run?

And all the while the siren whistled—a long, wailing, melancholy moan, rising and falling in the summer air. It was the police warning of danger, the signal to the townspeople to hide. So we stood irresolute on the canal

18. Square.

bank, waiting. I faced toward the guns. The horrible thing would pitch in front of me. I turned about, in the opposite direction—it would fall there. Never for a second was there any fear of death, but an agonizing fear of the concussion, of a jaw torn off, of a nose smashed in. A pile of new red tiles lay on the canal bank, and I heard Y. remark slowly, drawlingly, "These will fly in every direction, fly in a thousand pieces; they are awful!" A million cutting fragments! I moved away from them toward a patch of glowing yellow weeds,—yellow flowers, golden, triumphant, unterrified. I wanted to sit down among them. It seemed a calm, sensible thing to do. One move was as good as another.

In that fearful moment, there was not one intellectual faculty I could call upon. There was nothing in past experience, nothing of will-power, of judgment, of intuition, that could serve me. I was beyond and outside and apart from the accumulated experience of a lifetime. My intelligence was worthless in this moment of supreme need. Every decision would be wrong, every movement would be in the wrong direction, and it was also wrong to stand still. Right, left, forward, backward, there was no intellectual power to direct my steps.

IV

We stood in a little open triangle—on one side the water, on the other two sides rows of closed, empty houses. One of these houses had been destroyed during some previous bombardment; the upper part was blown away, and green canvas was stretched over the gaping, demolished roof. But as I looked at it, a woman suddenly ran into the square, rushed up to the door of this ruined house, beat upon it and was admitted. Sanctuary!

I shouted to Y. "Quick! quick! That house! They've got a cellar!" We flew across to the door—all that was left standing of that crumpled building—and beat upon it, over and over again. Would they never answer, would they never let us in? The next shell must come any second now, any second now. We pounded frantically on the door. It opened suddenly and a man stood there.

"Let us in," we cried. "Let us in! Have you a cellar?"

"But yes," he answered courteously. "Enter quickly—there is not much time."

He led the way down a narrow passage, across a shallow court, and raising a heavy door in the ground, preceded us down a flight of steep stone steps into the cool, sheltering darkness of a vaulted cellar. And as we descended, came the exploding roar of a rending shell.

The wonderful relief of that cellar! The feeling of security in the blessed darkness, the comfort of companionship—for as our eyes grew accustomed to the dim light, we discovered a score of people, refugees like ourselves, who like ourselves had fled from the terror without. A dim oil-lamp made a faint illumination, and an upward glance showed stout brick arches, supported by iron girders. Moreover, they say a shell never falls twice on exactly the same spot, and this strong vaulted ceiling had resisted a ton of steel two months ago. The man's wife welcomed us, and pushed forward a broken chair, which Y. and I shared. Then we all waited in silence, broken by an occasional whisper. In the gloom, we gradually discerned beds in corners, a cookstove, cupboards. This cellar was all the home these people knew, and here they had been living for the past two months. Two ragged children rolled hoops, and a floppy puppy tumbled here and there. A ray of sunlight filtered in from a barred window giving on the street. So we whispered and waited—waited.

Presently another knock sounded on the street door above, and after an interval our host led down another woman, a refugee like ourselves. Intense calm prevailed; not a sound, not a sob or outcry of any sort, nothing but acceptance and resignation, stoical and fatalistic. I murmured, "But this is terrible, is it not?" and a woman replied with a shrug, "What would you? This is a fortified town." That summed it up. This is war and Dunkirk is a fortified town. I recalled the hysterical sobbing of the London press, raving over "baby-killers" and "slayers of women,"[19] and contrasted it with the attitude of these people under fire, their dignified acceptance of war.

Another rapping on the street door, and another refugee appeared, this time a man. He told us that a second shell had struck the Place Jean Bart, and that another had killed eight people just outside the walls. We drew near to hear the whispered news. The puppy flopped about, and some of us

19. Rumors of German atrocities abounded early in the war. The British government's Bryce Report, published in May 1915, ostensibly verified many of these lurid tales.

leaned over to pat it. No one cared for the puppy, but it was a distraction, a human recognition of the normal, our touch with homely ways of life. Once again the earth rocked with concussion, and the little beast sprawled on its fat feet.

We counted them as they struck—four. Now it was time for the guns to cool. A woman rose to her feet and thanked our hosts for their hospitality, and we rose too, thanked them, and followed the woman into the street. Outside the sunlight was dazzling, but for the moment the danger was over, and we must make our way back to Malo as rapidly as possible. The little woman directed us on our way, and then left us, wishing us good luck.

Following her directions, we hastened along the deserted, sunbaked streets. Even in this brief respite, life was beginning again, reasserting itself. Soldiers hung about doorways; men walked in the middle of the roads. Through opening cellar doors and windows we had glimpses of living-rooms prepared for use during bombardment. People were raising their iron shutters, and protruding heads were stealing furtive glances into the sunlit, summer air.

That interminable walk through Dunkirk! In all directions we could see shattered houses; streets and sidewalks littered with broken glass, fallen bricks and rubbish; gaping walls open to the heavens. It was terrible to pass through those hot streets, wondering, as we walked, whether we should reach Malo before the guns began again. It was like walking in a nightmare, dragging leaden legs, with the terror that comes with dreams. A wrong turning, a false direction, and we should lose precious moments—those moments while the great guns cooled. And then, as turn after turn, street after street brought us nearer our destination, the awful tension relaxed. We were in action. Escaping, escaping! Approaching nearer and nearer, each moment, to a place of comparative safety. The battered houses, the desolation, the long length of the town under the glaring sun! Could we cross it in time?

A whirling motor sounded behind us—our truck returning from the docks! They took us aboard and dashed on. The tremendous relief of motion, the tremendous joy of clinging to the sides of a bounding motor, racing at top speed for the city gates! No matter what the outcome, here at last was decision and action, plan and will; not the hesitating, halting, baffling

indecision of an hour before, when all our intellectual faculties and intuition were in abeyance before a force that we could neither divine nor calculate upon.

At lunch we were all full of our different experiences. Mrs. A. and B. were on the docks when the bombardment began, but they continued about their work and loaded the *camion* unhesitatingly and unflinchingly. For them, action was clearly defined.

Shells began falling again during lunch, and we finished our meal in the twilight of the shuttered room. One struck the ground about a hundred yards to the side of, another in a field half a kilometre in front of, the hotel. Every ten or fifteen minutes they fell, and then we went upstairs to the balcony to watch them. Some passed directly over us; a few fell short, on one side or the other.

As the afternoon wanes, a high sea wind has sprung up, which seems to deflect them, and they are falling nearer and nearer. We have nothing to do but sit and watch them. So here we are, six of us, calm, smiling, apparently indifferent. Underneath, however, is a terrible tension as each shell falls, and the tension in the intervals of waiting is still more awful. We are in the direct line of fire, with no hospital, no work, no occupation of any sort. If we had, it would be different. Should we desert now, take refuge in any of the ambulances that are below, that would so willingly carry us to a place of safety, the authorities would consider it an indication of how we would stand by our patients under fire. So here we all sit on the balcony of this flimsy little hotel, wondering where the next shot will fall. The hotel has no cellar; it is a cheap frame structure that would collapse like a house of cards. We smoke endless cigarettes, consume endless cups of tea and coffee, and eat the supply of chocolate that is to last a month. Never in my life have I drunk so much tea and coffee—we are at it incessantly, with never a pause! No human power can protect us or intervene. We are all quiet and motionless, and utterly calm. Yet we strain our ears for each shot—when we see the smoke we know where *that* has fallen, at least.

I am writing this to kill time; yet as each shell strikes I spring to the window, and my chair falls backwards, while the others laugh. I start at each explosion, strain my eyes for the cloud of smoke—who knows in what direction it will arrive,—before us, to right, to left? Are they carrying past our tinderbox of a hotel? Is the next one going to fall short and strike?

Beneath the balcony, restless townspeople wander up and down the beach, seeking shelter, and knowing that there is none. Old men, old women leading children, with dogs following,—up and down they wander, to and fro, backward and forward, in the open, back again to the streets, sometimes alone, sometimes seeking the companionship of others as helpless as themselves. Terror-stricken, wretched, restless, utterly calm.

And so we sit on the balcony and watch the bursting shells—and wait.

A Joy Ride

At times, at the front, it gets frightfully dull. When there is an attack and, in consequence, plenty of work to do, it is all right in a field hospital.[1] But when there are no attacks, when there are no new patients and all the old ones become convalescent, when there is practically no work, it becomes insupportable. Nothing but the green hedge on all sides of us, shutting us into ourselves, into our little, gossiping enclosure, with no news and no newspapers, with no aeroplane to fly overhead, with nothing to do but walk down to the little pond and sail boats. There is a fleet of boats on our little pond, all made by our chief surgeon, in moments of *ennui*, and every day he goes down to the pond, sets his boats afloat on one side, picks them up on the other, and walks around and sets them going again. All because of supreme boredom, because there are no attacks, no work, nothing but convalescent patients, to be discharged in a day or two. It often gets like this, and at such times we can stand it no longer, and ask to be sent out in the motor, on joy rides, or any other rides, anywhere, just for a change.

There is a distinction between rides and joy rides. One means going away from the front, the other means going toward it. Thus, for a ride, we are often sent back to the English base, Hazebrouck, to send futile telegrams, just as an excuse; or else we are sent into Dunkirk, to buy white enamel basins, or oranges—anything. But a real joy ride consists in going toward the front, or in that direction. So on this particular day I was bored to extinction, because of lack of work, and to the Directrice,[2] who is my friend, I made

This essay appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* in October 1916.

1. The events in this essay begin at the same field hospital in Belgium that La Motte writes about in *The Backwash of War.*

2. Mary Borden, the American heiress who was the benefactor and director of the field hospital. She also appears in *The Backwash of War.*

loud and bitter complaint. I wanted to escape from the hospital for a few hours, to see something outside and beyond the thorn hedge which shuts us in.

The Directrice was sympathetic and she understood. So she told me I might go with one of the Canadian nurses to hunt up her nephew, who is in the Princess Pat's regiment,[3] off somewhere near Poperinghe.[4] The médecin chef,[5] in charge of the hospital, gave us a *laissez passer*[6] for Poperinghe, and the Directrice lent us her car, a limousine, painted gray. From a distance it looks like a staff car,[7] but near at hand, one sees that it is just a Ford. Nevertheless, as a Ford limousine, painted gray, war-color, it seems rather imposing. Williamson, a little English parson, was our chauffeur.

The Directrice wished us Godspeed. "Take a good joy ride, my dear!" she exclaimed. "Get cheered up! Go with Miss MacAlister, who has a nephew somewhere in the Canadian contingent; go and help her find him! It will do you good!"

I protested. "They will never let me through the English lines," I said. "They will spot my American accent. I'll be turned back."

But the Directrice was firm.

"Nonsense! The English can't tell the difference between American and Canadian accents," she replied. "You help MacAlister find her nephew. It won't be easy. Go and ask for him. She's shy. You aren't. Find him for her."

So we set out, Williamson driving, MacAlister and I inside, going to Poperinghe on a joy ride. A real joy ride, with a good, definite excuse for getting well to the front! It was good to leave our stupid little hospital behind. We are a French military hospital, situated ten kilometres behind the French lines, and distant from Poperinghe, and the English lines, about five miles.[8] As we reached the English lines we presented our *laissez passer* to the sentries, both French and English, who scanned our papers, found them all right, and permitted us to go on.

3. Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, a regiment established in August 1914.
4. A town in the Belgian province of West Flanders.
5. Chief doctor.
6. Travel pass.
7. A car used by a senior military officer.
8. The English and French armies each held sectors of the Belgian front.

It is a well-known fact that the nearer you go to the front, the less difficulty you have. It is tremendously difficult to get out of Paris, for example, into the zone of the armies, but once having achieved that, once having entered the war zone, the Forbidden Zone, as the English call it, you can circulate freely. All obstacles seem to melt away. The nearer the front, the easier it becomes. The sentries in the war zone seem to be more lenient, as if they felt that by the time you had got to them you must be all right. Otherwise, you would never have got so far. Your papers must of necessity have been examined so many times before, have been proved so absolutely correct, that it is hardly worth while to reëxamine them. So we traveled along the highroad toward Poperinghe, showed our papers to the sentries, and passed without difficulty into the English lines and were no more molested.

It was a gray afternoon, rather cold, the end of May. I like gray weather, preferably rainy weather, as it means less bombarding, less activity on the part of the guns. I hate the guns. We had telephoned to Poperinghe before we left, and found the town was not being shelled that day—a precaution I wished to take, for, as I say, I hate the guns, and could foresee no joy in a joy ride that led to a village under bombardment. So it was quiet enough as we drove along, and we were free to take interest in the movements of the English army. We had become so used to French troops, French transport wagons, French methods, that the sight of these things within the English lines was of great interest. The parson-chauffeur seemed interested in this too, and slowed down to a very easy pace, and we drove along, marveling at the immense, intricate ramifications and coördination of army activity in the rear of the firing lines.

Along the road, great munition convoys stood at rest—trains of giant trucks, either loaded with ammunition, or else empty and returning to base for more. We passed long lines of brown, battered London omnibuses, used for transporting troops to the trenches. Batteries of light and heavy artillery jogged by, and in the fields by the roadside we saw groups of heavy guns, halted and resting. Innumerable companies of soldiers passed along the road, some in full marching kit, others evidently resting, and bound for their baths, as they carried towels slung across their shoulders. Then we passed their bathing places, erected in fields, by brooks—little canvas enclosures, roofless. The highroad was crowded with convoys of all sorts, and wagons, guns, munitions, horses, men, passed us in steady streams, flowing

each way. It was the complex life of organization and preparation, back of the front.

Our road lay between rows of Belgian refugee houses, dozens of them, close together, bordering the roadsides. An occasional one was made of wood, but for the most part they consisted of frame supports, with sides made of interwoven boughs, like those used in trench-making, and filled in with clay. Most of them were neatly painted, and nearly all were thatched—little rows of one- and two-room houses, springing up mushroom-like, under the guns. Now and then an old brick farmhouse showed amongst the trees. It was a glorious May day—no dust, everything very clean and green and new as to foliage. I wanted a pet lamb. It would have been an addition to the hospital. Once we passed one in a field, lying by an armchair, in which some one had left some knitting. The vacant chair, the little lamb chewing its cud, made a pleasant picture, and it was so obviously the kind of pet lamb I wanted, that I rapped on the glass and told Williamson to remember about that lamb, and its farm, so that we could stop and buy it on the way back.

By and by we reached Poperinghe. I am not naturally what one would call brave, and since last summer, after our fourteen-hour bombardment in Dunkirk,[9] the sight of a shelled town makes me feel quite sick. They shell Poperinghe every day or so, as it is an important base and filled with troops, but, as I say, we had telephoned over just before we left, and found they were not shelling it to-day. Still, the sight of the battered houses filled me with dismay—a sort of nervous dread. The big public square in the centre of the town was surrounded by houses riddled with holes, pockmarked by bits of flying shell, stone, or brick. Hardly a pane of glass was intact, and some windows were entirely gone. Only an occasional house, however, was totally destroyed. The shells, apparently, were not heavy enough for wholesale damage, but the whole town was splintered, gashed, and bitten, from end to end, and the sight of it made me nervous. The streets were crowded—wagons, trucks, convoys, troops, officers' cars, coming and going in incessant streams. Military police stood in the centre of the little main street, to direct traffic as constant and heavy as on the Strand.[10] Think of it, a little

9. The bombardment is the subject of her essay "Under Shell-Fire at Dunkirk."

10. A major thoroughfare in London.

town like this, of only a few thousand inhabitants, shattered and battered by shells, with an army traffic so heavy that it required as much guiding and regulating as in the centre of London!

We drew up in the square, inquired for the Canadian troops, and were directed to a bureau in the town hall, where they said we could get all the information we wanted. When we had set off on our joy ride, I never expected to see anything more than Poperinghe, or to go anywhere else, and the sight of the shell-holes had rapidly allayed my curiosity. I found that MacAlister, however, had interpreted the matter differently. To find her nephew was not merely an excuse to get to Poperinghe: in her mind, the object of this excursion was actually to find him! However, I kept thinking that this would be impossible, that we would surely be turned back. We had no papers to authorize us to search for this boy. Such a thing was not allowed. Even mothers are not permitted to come to the war zone to look for their sons. So at this bureau, to which we addressed ourselves for information, I fully expected to be turned back. Not at all. The man inside was very nice. He could not tell us the whereabouts of the Canadian troops, but suggested that we go down the road about two miles, to Abele, the Canadian headquarters, where we could find out all we wanted. He asked us for no papers, nothing by which to establish our identity—he merely took our word that we were hunting for a nephew in the Princess Pat's and facilitated our search by suggesting Abele. I was relieved to find that Abele was away from the front, on the other side of Poperinghe; and here I thought our joy ride would reach an abrupt end.

So we continued on through the high street, through rows and rows of battered houses, with here and there an occasional one that was destroyed. The aspect of the town spoke of continual shelling, and it was good to leave it behind, and run out into the green country and look for lambs in the fields. We reached Abele finally, a quiet little village, and drew up before a large building, looking like a convent, which we were told was Canadian headquarters. I hoped the officers would prove exacting, would ask for our papers, and want to know who we were, and by what right we were trying to get to a Canadian camp. We crossed a paved inner courtyard, and found ourselves before the door of a handsome old house, guarded by a group of soldiers who made no objection to our entering. They said that inside we could find out everything we wished.

On the left of the courtyard was an absurd little sentry, prancing back and forth on sentry-go, evidently guarding some big military dignitary whose quarters occupied the entire wing of the building. We asked for the headquarters bureau; a ubiquitous Tommy directed us toward it, politely opened the door for us, and ushered us into an untidy little office, filled with crude office furniture. There were filing cases made of crates, typewriters stood on empty boxes, and the walls were covered with elaborate maps, photographs, and official orders and notices. Headquarters, and no mistake. Moreover, the polite little officer could tell us exactly what we wanted to know, the whereabouts of Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. He did not question us, demand any papers, or proofs or guaranties of any sort. Here, just behind the firing lines, two strange women suddenly appeared, and the young officer spread himself to give us the information we desired.

"The Princess Pat's is right *here*," he explained, laying his finger on the most beautiful map I've ever seen—a map, I suppose, issued by the War Office, a big, official map of some kind, with each little village and farmhouse taking up as much room as a province in Central China.

"Here," he continued, "is the camp of the Princess Pat's. You go back to Poperinghe, pass through the town, and take the highroad on the other side, toward Ypres—"[11]

"To where?" I gasped.

"Ypres," he repeated. "Take the highroad going from Poperinghe to Ypres, and then turn off at the third road to the right—turn off the highroad from Poperinghe to Ypres," he went on, repeating it over and over again, to impress it upon our minds; "turn off at the third road to the right, then go on for a bit, and you'll come to it."

MacAlister was drinking in every word. I was aghast to think that an innocent joy ride should lead toward Ypres! This certainly was overdoing it!

"And in case you forget, in case you should turn off at the second or fourth, instead of the third turning," went on that terrible, accurate, inexorable young man, "here is a piece of paper for you, with the directions

11. The strategically located city of Ypres was the site of intense fighting, including, the First Battle of Ypres (October 19–November 22, 1914) and Second Battle of Ypres (April 22–May 25, 1915). At the time of La Motte's "joy ride," German shelling and aerial bombing of the area had recently intensified.

written down. Show it to any one who has a map like this, and tell him to direct you to Square H, 19; Sheet 28. Princess Pat's is in that square."

Until then I had had a wild hope of being able to forget those clear and lucid directions, of becoming confused and forgetful, and in consequence, because of the lateness of the afternoon, suggesting that we turn toward home. Poperinghe was a joy ride, if you like, but any adventuring on the road to Ypres was sheer folly. But what could I do with MacAlister, with that bit of paper clutched firmly in her hand! She was tracking down that young nephew of hers, and the light of success and of devotion burned in her eyes. She left the bureau, and gave Williamson the verbal directions about the third turning to the right, and then pressed the bit of paper upon him.

"H, 19; Sheet 28."

We certainly were in for it!

Poperinghe gave me the same sick feeling again, as we drove through it. Moreover, by now the sun had penetrated the clouds, and a charming summer afternoon was upon us—and they always bombard in fine weather! Ten minutes more, and we had left Poperinghe behind us, and were bowling along the highroad toward Ypres!

This road likewise was full of traffic, crowded with the same sinister, wasteful, mighty traffic that we had encountered all afternoon. We noticed that all the horses had fringes over their eyes, whether they were gun horses or attached to water-carts—thick rope fringes, hanging well down over their eyes, evidently for a purpose. We also passed many Red Cross ambulances. Presently I noticed that we were drawing very close to the captive balloons, the observation balloons that mark the lines, and are anchored three or four miles behind them.[12] Captive balloons are shelled, now and then, and we were getting much too close to them. They loomed bigger and bigger, and then, to my horror, we passed them! They were behind us, tugging at their anchors behind us, instead of in front! And still we sped on toward Ypres!

I had one more card to play. I rapped on the window, and Williamson slowed down, while I put my head out the window and called to him.

"Don't forget to stop at that farm, on our way back, so I can buy that pet lamb—leave time for that," I exclaimed.

12. Manned observation balloons provided an aerial view of the enemy's position.

Williamson said he'd remember. He also added that we had plenty of time.

We finally reached the third turning to the right, where we stopped and asked the traffic soldier if we were going straight. Here, far away on a Belgian highroad, traffic is so thick that a soldier with a red flag stands in the middle of the road, at a crossroads, to direct it.

This third turning to the right was awful. It was just a track through fields. Williamson slowed the car down to a walk, and we bumped along over tremendous holes and ruts, over the roughest road I have ever seen. The clay was dry and hard; in wet weather it must have been a bog. At intervals, at crossroads, we came upon notice boards reading, "No Road." British humor, perhaps, for how could anything have been less of a road than that we were traversing? I wondered what these "no roads" could have been like, in comparison to our thoroughfare!

We jolted on for half a mile or so, through fenceless fields, over this frightful track, and then came to a huge encampment. There were hundreds of little, conical wooden huts, like Indian tepees, and then there were still other huts or shacks, of the kind called portable. Soldiers lounged about in the doorways of these huts, and we could see a little way in through these openings, into bare, dirty, desolate interiors, devoid of every beauty and comfort, just like animal pens, in which animals wait to be slaughtered.

Only the lounging soldiers did not seem like animals awaiting slaughter, or perhaps they were unconscious of their fate, just like animals. They seemed gay and cheerful enough, and smiled and waved to us as we passed, and when we asked if this camp was the Princess Pat's a dozen voices shouted that it wasn't, that we must go farther along. So we continued to bounce along at a snail's pace, through many thousands of soldiers *en repos*, released for two weeks from the trenches, to rest. We passed a field full of hundreds of them, watching a baseball game. They played in a bare field by the roadside, though the surrounding fields were green, full of summer grain. Only their playing field was fallow, just bare brown mud, unploughed, unplanted. But their dingy khaki uniforms were mud-color too. Such is the value of protective coloring.

Williamson would have sworn, had he not been a parson. He piloted us along that villainous road for something like two miles, expecting a spring

to break any minute. MacAlister was exalted. She was coming nearer and nearer to her nephew, and she leaned out and scrutinized every dusty face that passed, hoping it might be Donald. For myself, the captive balloons in our rear kept worrying me. They were steadily receding to the rear, as we were going forward. Undoubtedly we were drawing very close to the trenches.

Suddenly a blinding flash, a deafening explosion! Another flash and crash, and another! Three shells, in as many seconds, burst a hundred feet to our left. The detonation was terrific, the concussion tremendous. They were shelling us! This was too much!

I rapped on the glass. Rapped sharply for Williamson to stop. Rapped, just as you'd rap on a taxi glass, on rue de Rivoli,[13] and tell the man to stop at Rumpelmayer's.[14] I leaned out.

"For heaven's sake, go back, man! They're shelling the road! Go back quick!"

"Eh?" said Williamson in his slow, British way. "Are they?" Another terrific explosion cut off my words, so I had to repeat. Then I heard MacAlister saying, "Oh, go on! I want to see Donald!"

A three-sided discussion followed, about a point on which there should have been no discussion. Williamson leaned round from his seat, while MacAlister and I talked to him from the door. MacAlister wanted to see Donald. I had no wish whatever to see Donald, especially under these circumstances. A group of six or eight Tommies crowded round us, intensely amused at this excited squabble, utterly surprised at the sight of a strange car, and two unknown women, almost up to the trenches.

"Go back quick!" I commanded. "Can't you see they're shelling the road?"

"Eh?" said Williamson; while MacAlister kept repeating, "I want to see Donald."

Between that slow-witted parson-chauffeur and that devoted girl, I got exasperated. I hate shells and am desperately afraid of them. It is so refreshing to admit the truth.

13. A fashionable shopping street in Paris.

14. A famous Parisian tea room.

I got out of the car. "Oh, go on!" I exclaimed. "You two go on, if you like. Go see Donald. For myself, I'll wait here till you come back again! You can pick me up here when you've had enough!"

The Tommies crowded close, delighted.

"May I stay here with you?" I asked, turning to them. "Till they come back for me?"

A chorus of "Oh, certainly, sister!" greeted me.

MacAlister banged the door shut, Williamson glared at me, and the car jolted painfully away.

So I stood in a large field in Flanders, surrounded by half-a-dozen grinning Canadian soldiers, and considered the situation. It was a little unusual. However, the shock of those shells had been terrible. Donald was not my nephew, anyhow, and I don't pay calls under shell-fire. That's gratuitous.

A little wooden hut stood by the roadside, the roof of which sloped steeply to the ground, like an inverted V. The hut was separated from the road by a deep ditch, like a trench, which was spanned by a wooden bridge. On all sides stretched bare, brown fields of unploughed earth, not a sprout of green anywhere to be seen. The sergeant stood beside me, politely hospitable, pointing out objects of interest in the landscape. Over there, he said, was Ypres. That was the ruins of the Cloth Hall. Next it was the ruins of the church.

Ypres! That terrible Ypres, where they all died like flies! That shambles, that place of death! So that was Ypres, off there on the horizon, beyond the near green treetops, beyond the brown surrounding fields. Next, that little row of Noah's Ark trees was St. Eloi,[15] just beside Ypres, a little to the right. And away beyond, in the distance, like little black spots in the sunlight, were the German captive balloons. And over yonder—

Guns banged forth on all sides, a dozen at once.

"Taube," said the sergeant.

Overhead it came, just a little way behind us, very high, very slow, inexorable, coming in our direction. As it flew slowly toward us, anti-aircraft guns burst forth on every hand, and as the shells exploded in the air, little puffs of smoke hung there, in the sky, below the Taube. They never came

15. A battle had recently been fought at St. Eloi, from March 27 to April 16, 1916.

anywhere near it, those futile puffs of smoke, while the high, disdainful Danger flew serenely on, invulnerable, as unavoidable as Fate.

"Step into the shelter, sister, quick," called the sergeant. "It's the rule." He pointed to the flimsy little wooden hut.

I cleared the ditch at a bound, into the good, protecting darkness of that frail shelter, where one could not stand upright under the low ridge-pole. The men came in too, but with less haste. We all stood crouching, under the low roof, awaiting the bomb. It was a hideous sensation. The futility of that frail shelter—it was just like the fringes over the horses' eyes, so that they could not see. We just could not see, that was all. But it helped.

The sergeant showed me a ham. He picked it up from a pile, and passed it to me, remarking that the men were well fed. I don't know whether he really thought so, or whether he was conversing to distract my attention. Hams could not do it. Nothing could, with that Thing flying slowly, inexorably overhead. That tense dread, that horror of the Terror that flies filled my consciousness to the exclusion of all else.

"We're well fed," he repeated. The Thing must be directly above us now—yet I had a mental vision of a very lean ham, and of rows of canned fruit lying along one side of the tent, and next them, heaps of tins of condensed milk. I saw these things, subconsciously, and heard the sergeant tell of them, while all the time that Thing was flying overhead. All around, the little cannon roared, and across the road a *mitrailleuse* pattered, like some one drawing a stick along a picket fence.

There was a rattling and popping on the roof—shrapnel bullets, and bits of shell falling back from those futile anti-aircraft guns. That's what the shelter was for, a protection from bits of falling shell. A bomb would have crashed clean through it.

"Will they drop a bomb?" I asked. In those tense seconds, I had seen and admired every bit of food in the place. I simply had to interrupt.

"She may—or she mayn't," was the guarded reply.

The noise was incessant. We were the centre of a ring of fire, surrounded by a circle of anti-aircraft guns.

"She's gone over!" cried a Tommy; and instantly there was a rush from the shelter, a rush to look upward at the disappearing Taube.

"Don't look up, men!" cried the sergeant, for little scraps of iron continued to rain downward. But a minute later we were all standing in the roadside,

while the Taube sailed away, backward over the English lines, untouched, unscathed.

I took breath again. Just "Whew!" There wasn't anything else to say. Just "Whew!" and then things seemed to go on again, inside. That's what it's like to be afraid. I had not behaved one whit differently from the men, yet the difference was, they had not seemed to mind. I had minded, dreadfully. But outwardly, we acted just the same. The question is not whether one is afraid or not. It is what one *does* when one is afraid that counts.

Suddenly a big, bald-headed man ran from the shelter, and fell on his knees a hundred feet away, and began digging with his hands. Others ran toward him as he dug in the earth, and so did I. I did not want to miss anything.

"Shell, sister," explained some one. "From one of our guns."

"Has it exploded?" I asked prudently.

"Can't tell yet," replied the man on his knees, digging. I beat a hasty retreat. There was nothing glorious about it; it was just a strategic retreat. Unexploded shells explode, and after the crisis of the past ten minutes, I was not up to another. A few minutes later, however, the man returned and handed me a three-inch shell, the nose gone, empty inside, and covered with mud. It was an English shell, from an anti-aircraft gun, which had fallen not a hundred feet from where we stood, burying itself in three feet of earth. As the danger was over for the moment, the sergeant allowed himself to remark that had that shell struck us, it would have smashed up the shelter completely.

Then the sergeant proposed tea. I had a singular lack of appetite, but he was trying to entertain me, a guest who had suddenly stepped out of a motor, and demanded his hospitality, apparently for an indefinite period. So while he busied himself over the preparation of tea, I stood on the roadside, contemplating the landscape. It was not reassuring in the least. The sun had come out brightly by this time, the last of the rain clouds being wafted off to the rear of the English balloons, and in the clear, dry air the sinister ruins of Ypres stood out with appalling distinctness. Still more visible were the Noah's Ark trees which marked St. Eloi. Out of that still, bright, smiling air came puffs of smoke, and following the puffs, a few seconds later, roared deep, sullen detonations. The sergeant stopped his tea-making for an instant and came to my side to point out certain features of the landscape:

the puffs of smoke were bursting shells, falling just back of a red-tiled barn, about three miles away. Then, seeing that I was well entertained, he went back to the shelter again and said he would call me when all was ready. So there I stood, in the fresh sunshine of a late May afternoon, watching shells burst, just over yonder!

I began to realize that as a guest I was rather hopeless, and that this polite little soldier was trying to make the best of the situation. It is hard to realize that people are trying to make the best of you, but he did it well, and presently announced that everything was ready and would I please come in? A turned-up soap-box served as chair, and a similar one as table, upon which latter rested a plate of enormous thick slices of heavily buttered bread. I received a giant white enameled mug containing strong hot tea, while the little man opened a tin of condensed milk from the stock of that article to which he had drawn my attention a short while before. Next he opened a can of peaches, and here my war knife, with its hundred blades, came into play for stirring and spreading. Thus we sat opposite each other, with a good, substantial English tea spread before us, and the guns booming in the distance. Just back of us, a hundred feet to the rear, the ground was torn up by those four shells which had been aimed at us, and which had stopped our, that is, my, progress. A hundred feet in the other direction was the hole in which the English shell had buried itself, while on the floor at my side lay the shell itself, a mud-covered souvenir of this joy ride! And as we ate and drank, we watched shells bursting behind the red-tiled barn, over the rims of our teacups!

Up and down the road officers cantered by, on well-groomed, handsome horses, while many soldiers came and went on foot. I found myself the object of considerable curiosity and attention, and soon became rather fearful as to what would happen if the others failed to return. I had visions of being arrested and taken to headquarters, and I also reflected that the same thing might easily happen to them—to Williamson and MacAlister. In either case, I was in a bad plight. It would be impossible for me to make my way back on foot, through all those sentries, even to Poperinghe, to say nothing of being able to walk five miles farther back, to our hospital. My pocket was full of identification papers, but with no pass or explanation to account for my being so near Ypres. It was not my fault that I had got this far—Heaven knows I had not meant to—but this fact would not

suffice in case of arrest. An hour ago, I had been amused and pleased at their lack of vigilance, but I suddenly realized that this lack of vigilance might prove extremely disagreeable for me. They would make up for it in sudden strictness should I attempt to pass the lines again, to set out on a ten-mile walk toward home. The same thoughts were evidently passing through the sergeant's mind, and he seemed to become uneasy and conscious of my presence; therefore I retired deeply into the tent every time an officer passed by. Every moment I expected to be arrested as a spy.

Just then, when the sergeant and I had about run out of conversation, and were given up to anxiety, came the welcome toot of the motor-horn, and Williamson and MacAlister were back again, complacent and satisfied. They had accomplished their object, and had found the little nephew, a twenty-year-old private in the Princess Pat's. Nor had they met with adventures of any sort,—no shells, no Taubes, no tea-party,—nothing but a grateful, dirty little nephew, who was overjoyed to see his aunt. All the adventures had befallen me, the prudent one, who, in planning what seemed the safest course, had found herself in the centre of a rousing fire!

That night, after dinner, when we were safely back in the French lines again, some of the young Canadian engineers came up to spend the evening. We recounted our adventures, and they seemed incredulous beyond words that we had been able to penetrate so far into the English lines, had found it so easy to approach the front, unchallenged in any way. One of them remarked,—

"You know you were in a limousine, on a back road. From a distance, it looked like a staff car. You were probably shelled on purpose."

Then the other youth spoke up.

"Just accident," he said emphatically. "There was no attack to-day, and on days when there are no attacks, the roads back of the lines are always shelled. On such days, it is far more dangerous two or three miles behind the lines than in the trenches. They shell roads and crossroads indiscriminately, hoping to catch something by accident—troops, convoy trains, ammunition wagons, anything! On days like this, there are always three or four casualties a day, from this desultory shelling. Didn't you notice any-

thing like that—dead horses lying by the roadside, shot to pieces, mangled? Horses from transport wagons, hit by chance shells."

MacAlister's eyes grew round with excitement.

"Why yes, I saw that once—just as we were reaching Poperinghe! I wondered what had happened!"

"I didn't see anything like that!" I exclaimed. "If I had, we'd have turned back at once! But *why* didn't I see it? How did I happen to miss it?"

"At that moment," said MacAlister with intense significance, "you were looking about for a pet lamb!"

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Significant Publications by Ellen N. La Motte

May 1901	"Early Struggles with Contagion," *American Journal of Nursing*
Aug. 1904	"Piqures—The Italian Method of Giving Medicine," *Johns Hopkins Nurses Alumnae Magazine*
Sept. 1904	"A Modern Italian Hospital," *American Journal of Nursing*
Nov. 1904	"Private Nursing in Italy," *American Journal of Nursing*
March 1905	"Hôpital Général, Rheims," *American Journal of Nursing*
Nov. 1905	"Humor of the Districts," *Johns Hopkins Nurses Alumnae Magazine*
Dec. 1905	"Tuberculosis Work of the Instructive Visiting Nurse Association of Baltimore," *American Journal of Nursing*
Feb. 1906	"The American Tuberculosis Exhibition," *American Journal of Nursing*
Feb. 1906	"Humor of the Districts," *Johns Hopkins Nurses Alumnae Magazine*
Sept. 1906	"The Hotel-Dieu of Paris—An Historical Sketch," *Medical Library and Historical Journal*
Dec. 1906	"The Danger of Sending Consumptives to the Country," *Johns Hopkins Nurses Alumnae Magazine*

March 1907 "The Danger of Sending Consumptives to the Country," *Charities and Commons*

Sept. 1907 "'Light Work' As a Factor in the Spread of Tuberculosis," *Charities and Commons*

March 1908 "Some Phases of the Tuberculosis Question," *American Journal of Nursing*

June 1908 "'Light Work' As a Factor in the Spread of Tuberculosis," *Maryland Medical Journal*

Dec. 1908 "The Unteachable Consumptive," *Southern Workman*

April 1909 "The Present Status of Tuberculosis Work among the Poor," *Maryland Medical Journal* (coauthored with Mary E. Lent)

April 1909 "The Unteachable Consumptive," *Journal of the Outdoor Life*

Aug. 1909 "Strawberries—Strawberries," *Survey*

March 1910 "The Neglected Tuberculosis Child," *Journal of the Outdoor Life*

April 1910 "The Present Attitude of the Tuberculosis Nurse towards Her Work," *Bulletin of the Johns Hopkins Hospital*

Jan. 1911 "Milk and Eggs for Consumptives" *Journal of the Outdoor Life*

Oct. 1911 "The Nurse as a Social Worker," *Visiting Nurse Quarterly*

Aug. 1912 "Municipal Care of Tuberculosis," *American Journal of Nursing*

Oct. 1912 "The Value of Record Keeping," *Visiting Nurse Quarterly*

July 27, 1913 "While Britain Prays, Her Militants Sing Their Hymns of War," *Baltimore Sun*

Aug. 10, 1913	"Miss La Motte Takes Tea with Militant Leaders in London Town," *Baltimore Sun*
Aug. 31, 1913	"Wherein Miss La Motte Forces Man to Assume Silly Position," *Baltimore Sun*
Sept. 7, 1913	"Caught in Suffragette Riot, Ellen N. La Motte, of Baltimore, Is Knocked Down and Then—Well, She Writes about It," *Baltimore Sun*
Sept. 28, 1913	"Ellen La Motte Insulted on Crowded London Street," *Baltimore Sun*
Oct. 26, 1913	"Miss La Motte Sees Reason in Blood," *Baltimore Sun*
1915	*The Tuberculosis Nurse: Her Function and Her Qualifications* (New York: Putnam)
April 1915	"Experiences in the American Ambulance Hospital, Neuilly, France," *American Journal of Nursing* (not published under her own name)
July 10, 1915	"An American Nurse in Paris," *Survey*
Nov. 1915	"Under Shell-Fire at Dunkirk," *Atlantic Monthly*
May 1916	"Under Shell Fire," *Johns Hopkins Nurses Alumnae Magazine*
Aug. 1916	"Heroes," *Atlantic Monthly*
Sept. 1916	*The Backwash of War: The Human Wreckage of the Battlefield as Witnessed by an American Hospital Nurse* (New York and London: Putnam)
Oct. 1916	"A Joy Ride," *Atlantic Monthly*
Nov. 1916	"Heroes," *Johns Hopkins Nurses Alumnae Magazine*
1918	"Under Shell-Fire at Dunkirk," in *War Readings* (New York: Scribner)
Dec. 1918	"Under a Wine-Glass," *Century*
1919	*Peking Dust* (New York: Century)

1919	*Civilization: Tales of the Orient* (New York: Doran)
1919	"Under a Wine-Glass," in *The Best Short Stories of 1919* (Boston: Small, Maynard)
March 1919	"The Yellow Streak," *Century*
April 1919	"Homesick," *Century*
Aug. 1919	"Peking Dust," *Overland Monthly*
Oct. 1919	"The Golden Stars," *Century*
1920	*The Opium Monopoly* (New York: Macmillan)
Feb. 1920	"The Ruins of Angkor," *Harper's Magazine*
Aug. 1920	"The Malay Girl," *Century*
Sept. 1920	"Widows and Orphans," *Century*
Dec. 1921	"The Pan-Asian Movement," *Foreign Affairs*
June 1922	"America and the Opium Trade," *Atlantic Monthly*
1924	*The Ethics of Opium* (New York: Century)
Sept. 1924	"Opium and England," *Nation*
Nov. 1924	"Opium at Geneva," *Survey*
1925	*Snuffs and Butters* (New York: Century)
Feb. 1925	"The Deadlock at Geneva," *Nation*
May 1925	"The Americans Wouldn't Compromise!" *Nation*
Sept. 1926	"Opium—Up to Date," *Nation*
Jan. 1927	"A Desert Owl," *Atlantic Monthly*
June 1927	"The Opium Trade at Geneva," *Nation*
March 1928	"Italy Fights Opium," *Nation*

June 3, 1928	"Mantle of Secrecy Placed About Dope Evil by League," *New York American*
July 1928	"Opium Leaks Through," *Nation*
Aug. 1928	"Hidden Treasure," *Atlantic Monthly*
Dec. 1928	"Opium-Smoking in the Far East," *Nation*
1929	*Opium in Geneva: Or How the Opium Problem Is Handled by the League of Nations* (New York: self-pub.)
May 1929	"Drug 'Limitation' in the United States," *Nation*
June 1929	"Drugs at Geneva," *Nation*
July 1929	"The Opium Problem," *American Journal of Nursing*
March 1930	"The Christmas Boat," *Harper's Magazine*
March 1931	"The Three Widows—The True Story of an International Crisis," *Harper's Magazine*
April 1931	"A Coronation in Abyssinia," *Harper's Magazine*
May 1931	"Opium—China's Ancient Enemy," *Nation*
April 1932	"'Limiting' Drug Manufacture," *Nation*
Feb. 1934	"Manchukuo and the Opium Trade," *Nation*
Aug. 1934	*The Backwash of War*, republished in a new edition (New York: Putnam)

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Notes

Introduction

1. "List of New Books," *Athenaeum*, Dec. 26, 1919, 1411.

2. Among scholars, much less general readers, *The Backwash of War* long remained unknown. Twenty years ago, it was difficult to find any scholarship about it. More recent works have begun to fill that void, including Christine E. Hallett, *Nurse Writers of the Great War* (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 2016); Hazel Hutchison, *The War that Used Up Words: American Writers and the First World War* (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 2015); Giorgio Mariani, *Waging War on War: Peacefighting in American Literature* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 2015); Margaret R. Higonnet, introduction to *Nurses at the Front* (Boston: Northeastern Univ. Press, 2001); and "Ellen La Motte and Mary Borden, a Nursing Couple," in *Bi-Textualität: Inszenierungen des Paares*, ed. Annegret Heitmann, Sigrid Nieberle, Barbara Schaff, and Sabine Schülting (Bielefeld: Erich Schmidt, 2001), 92–103; and Angela K. Smith, *The Second Battlefield: Women, Modernism and the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 2000). Two earlier works are Claire M. Tylee, *The Great War and Women's Consciousness* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), and Charles V. Genthe, *American War Narratives, 1917–1918* (New York: David Lewis, 1969).

3. La Motte also kept a diary during the war, which Lea M. Williams mentions in a footnote to "Ellen N. La Motte: The Making of a Nurse, Writer, and Activist," *Nursing History Review* 23 (2015): 56–86. Williams has declined to share the location of the diary, which is in a private collection, and I have been unable to locate it. Additionally, there is a war essay, "Experiences in the American Ambulance Hospital, Neuilly, France," which La Motte clearly wrote but which was not published under her name. It is discussed later in this introduction.

4. Among the few works that focus on aspects of La Motte's life, apart from her war nursing, are Alice Kelly, "The American Friends," *Times Literary Supplement*, March 29, 2017, 17–19; Williams, "Ellen N. La Motte"; Keiko Sugiyama, "Ellen N. La Motte, 1873–1961: Gender and Race in Nursing," *Japanese Journal of American Studies* 17 (2006): 126–42; and Sugiyama, "Ellen N. La Motte: A Nurse in the 'Orient,'" *Keisen Jogakuen College Bulletin* 17 (2005): 87–102.

5. The book's copyright date is September 22, 1916. *Catalogue of Copyright Entries—Books*, part 1, vol. 13, entry 5647 (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, Copyright Office, 1916), 906.

6. The advertisement appeared in the back pages of other books published by Putnam and in various publications.

7. Robert Lynd, "The Backwash of War," *Publisher's Weekly*, Sept. 16, 1916, 850.

8. "Backwash of War," *New York Times Book Review*, Oct. 15, 1916, 432.

9. "The Backwash of War," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Jan. 13, 1917, 6.

10. "Ellen La Motte's Stories Gripping, Grewsome, Great," *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 14, 1917, 23.

11. In the 1980s Angela Ingram wrote to the Bodley Head, which had acquired Putnam, and confirmed that the book had been published in England in 1916. Angela Ingram, "Un/Reproductions: Estates of Banishment in English Fiction after the Great War," in *Women's Writing in Exile*, ed. Mary Lynn Broe and Angela Ingram (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1989), 343n4.

12. "Organization and Work of the 'Military Room' of the Official Press Bureau," WAR: Censorship by the Press Bureau during 1914–1918 collection, National Archives, London, United Kingdom.

13. According to the date stamp in the book, the British Library received it on October 14, 1919.

14. "More Truth from the Trenches," *Pearson's Magazine* 38, no. 6 (Dec. 1917): 265.

15. "'The Backwash of War,' by Ellen La Motte," *Issues and Events: American Liberal Review* 8, no. 4 (Jan. 26, 1918): 110.

16. "Miss La Motte's Book," *Wilmington (DE) Morning News*, Sept. 6, 1917, 4.

17. Alice Sweeney, "The Backwash of War," *Vassar Miscellany Monthly* 3, no. 5 (March 1918): 208.

18. "Book Review," *Harvard Monthly*, 62, no. 10 (Feb. 1917): 281–82.

19. Marguerite Mooers Marshall, "Love for Wife and Home a Marked Characteristic of the Wounded Poilu," *New York Evening World*, May 30, 1918, 8.

20. "Ellen La Motte's Stories," 23.

21. "Backwash of War," *NYT Book Review*, 432.

22. "By the Way," *New World: A Monthly Journal of Christian Thought and Practice* 1, no. 7 (July 1918): 167.

23. "More Truth from the Trenches," 264.

24. Marshall, "Love for Wife and Home," 8.

25. Robert Morss Lovett, "Books in Brief," *New Republic*, Nov. 7, 1934, 374–75.

26. W. G. Fuller, "The Lady with the Lamp," *Masses*, Jan. 1917, 29–30.

27. Floyd Dell, "The Book of the Month," *Masses*, Jan. 1917, 30.

28. "Liberator Book Shop," *Liberator*, April 1918, 42; and Sept. 1918, 35.

29. Margaret Lane, "The Liberator and the News Stands," *Liberator*, Dec. 1918, 49.

30. "Safeguarding Our Minds," *Nation*, Dec. 28, 1918, 795; and H. C. Peterson and Gilbert C. Fite, *Opponents of War, 1917–1918* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1957), 100.

31. "List of New Books," 1411.

32. Rand Book Store Advertisement, "Timely Books Make Ideal Gifts," *Nation*, Dec. 13, 1919, x.

33. G. P. Putnam's Sons royalty statements sent to La Motte, located in a private collection.

34. Skygac's Column, *Cleveland Toiler*, March 26, 1920, 2.

35. "The Russian Soldier," *Liberator*, April 1920, 47.

36. "Books and Authors," *New York Times Book Review*, Aug. 12, 1934, 15.

37. The Literary Guidepost was distributed by the Associated Press. The review ran in many newspapers, including the *Wilkes-Barre (PA) Record*, Aug. 30, 1934, 8.

38. This version of the review, titled "Scanning New Books," appeared in many newspapers, including the *St. Cloud (MN) Times*, Aug. 28, 1934, 7.

39. Lovett, "Books in Brief," 375.

40. "So This Is War," *Fitchburg (MA) Sentinel*, Feb. 15, 1936, 3.

41. Genthe, *American War Narratives*, 157.

42. Bruce Cook, *Dalton Trumbo* (New York: Scribner, 1977), 130.

43. Edith Wharton, *Fighting France, From Dunkerque to Belport* (New York: Scribner, 1915), 54, 135.

44. The *Detroit Journal* article was reprinted, under the title "The Backwash of War," in other newspapers, including the *Chicago Tribune*, Jan. 3, 1917, 6.

45. Hutchison, *War That Used Up Words*, 160.

46. Stein also became a godparent to Hemingway's son Jack, who was born in 1923.

47. Stein's copy of *Backwash* was donated, as part of Stein's personal library, to Yale University's Beinecke Library.

48. Eric Solomon, "From Christ in Flanders to Catch-22: An Approach to War Fiction," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 11, no. 1 (Spring 1969): 854–55.

49. Frank H. Mason, "The American Ambulance," *Survey* 34, no. 25 (Sept. 18, 1915): 563–64.

50. Through labyrinthine research, I have been able to identify the article's ostensible authors as Katherine Kerr and Marion E. Hesseltine, both unpublished American nurses who worked with La Motte at the American Ambulance in Paris. By borrowing their initials, La Motte, a very prominent figure in the field of public health and regular contributor to the *American Journal of Nursing*, was able to cloak her authorship of the essay. Even so, readers might have suspected something was amiss, as it was peculiar for the journal not to print authors' full names.

Interestingly, two months later, in June 1915, Kerr did publish an essay, "War Treatment of Wounds and Illnesses," in the *American Journal of Nursing*. It is a straightforward work, which does not resemble La Motte's war writing in style, about the American Ambulance Hospital. In it Kerr discusses in detail the transport of patients from battlefield to hospital and the protocol for treating various types of cases, replete with hand-drawn illustrations.

51. K. K. and M. E. H., "Experiences in the American Ambulance Hospital, Neuilly, France," *American Journal of Nursing* 15, no. 7 (April 1915), 549–54.

52. Emily Crane Chadbourne to Gertrude Stein, Sept. 3 [1915], Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut (hereafter YU).

53. Evarts B. Greene, ed., *War Readings* (New York: Scribner, 1918), iii.

54. Edna L. Foley, "Reading for Public Health Nurses," *American Journal of Nursing* 17, no. 1 (Oct. 1916): 62.

55. Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* (New York: Scribner, 1929), 196.

56. Christine E. Hallett focuses on this subject in *Nurse Writers of the Great War*, and Anne Powell offers a sampling of works by British writers in *Women in the War Zone: Hospital Service in the First World War* (Stroud, UK: History Press, 2009).

57. Olive Dent, *A V.A.D. in France* (London: Richards, 1917), 39.

58. *Diary of a Nursing Sister on the Western Front, 1914–1915* (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1915), 89–90, 104. The book is commonly attributed to Kathleen Luard.

59. "Hôpital Mobile No. 1," *British Journal of Nursing*, Sept. 16, 1916, 232.

60. Violetta Thurstan, *Field Hospital and Flying Column* (London: Putnam, 1915), 28.

61. Violetta Thurstan, *A Text Book of War Nursing* (London: Putnam, 1917), 13.

62. Marie Van Vorst, *War Letters of an American Woman* (London: John Lane, 1916), 153, 247. Van Vorst also inaccurately indicates that La Motte was already nursing in Belgium in December 1914.

63. Van Vorst, *War Letters*, 108, 110.

64. *The Forbidden Zone* was published in England in 1929 and in the United States in 1930.

65. Mary Borden, *Journey Down a Blind Alley* (New York: Harper, 1946), 6–8.

66. Agnes Warner, *My Beloved Poilus* (St. John, NB: Barnes, 1917), 60, 66.

67. Maud Mortimer, *A Green Tent in Flanders* (New York: Doubleday, Page, 1917), 66, 178.

68. Borden, *Journey Down a Blind Alley*, 8.

69. Marshall, "Love for Wife and Home," 8.

70. Warner, *My Beloved Poilus*, 60, 63, 65.

71. Mortimer, *Green Tent*, 56.

72. Warner, *My Beloved Poilus*, 89.

73. Mortimer, *Green Tent*, 226.

74. Mary Borden, *The Forbidden Zone* (New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1930), 105.

75. Borden, preface to *Forbidden Zone*.

76. Mortimer, *Green Tent*, 146, 153.

77. Mortimer, *Green Tent*, 153.

78. Warner, *My Beloved Poilus*, 81.

79. Borden, *Forbidden Zone*, 78, 82.

80. Chadbourne to Stein, Sept. 3 [1915]. Chadbourne and La Motte became a couple during the first winter of the war and remained together until La Motte's death in 1961.

81. Mortimer, *Green Tent*, 156–59.

82. Mortimer, *Green Tent*, 183.

Biography

1. Variations in the written form of the family surnames are standardized here as "duPont" and "La Motte," except when they appear in quoted text. Likewise, the name of the family company is standardized as the DuPont Company.

2. Marquis James, *Alfred I. duPont: The Family Rebel* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1941), 96.

3. "La Motte, Ellen," JHH School of Nursing Applications, Ellen N. La Motte files, Alan Mason Chesney Medical Archives, Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions (hereafter JHMI).

4. James, *Alfred I. duPont*, 82–83, 101–3, 123–25, 129.

5. "La Motte, Ellen," JHH application, JHMI.

6. "La Motte, Ellen," JHH application.

7. La Motte to Miss Adelaide Nutting, Sept. 23, 1898, "La Motte, Ellen," JHH applications, JHMI.

8. "Social and Personal Notes," *Wilmington (DE) Evening Journal*, Nov. 26, 1898, 4.

9. "World of Society," *Wilmington (DE) Morning News*, Nov. 26, 1898, 6.

10. "Hospital and Training-School Items," *American Journal of Nursing* 3, no. 5 (Feb. 1903): 375.

11. Ellen La Motte, "Early Struggles with Contagion," *American Journal of Nursing* 1, no. 8 (May 1901): 545.

12. Ellen N. La Motte, "A Modern Italian Hospital," *American Journal of Nursing* 4, no. 12 (Sept. 1904): 936, 938.

13. James, *Alfred I. duPont,* 15, 19.

14. Ellen N. La Motte, "Tuberculosis Work of the Instructive Visiting Nurse Association of Baltimore," *American Journal of Nursing* 6, no. 3 (Dec. 1905): 142, 146–47.

15. See the list of La Motte's publications in this volume.

16. "Proceedings of the Twelfth Annual Convention of the Nurses' Associated Alumnae of the United States," *American Journal of Nursing* 9, no. 12 (September 1909): 931. "Proceedings of the Fifteenth Annual Convention of the Nurses' Associated Alumnae of the United States," *American Journal of Nursing* 12, no. 11 (August 1912): 940.

17. M. R. Pennock, *Makers of Nursing History* (New York: Lakeside, 1940), 136.

18. Ellen N. La Motte, "Humor of the Districts," *Johns Hopkins Nurses Alumnae Magazine* 5, no. 1 (Feb. 1906): 42; and Ellen N. La Motte, "Humor of the Districts," *Johns Hopkins Nurses Alumnae Magazine* 4, no. 4 (Nov. 1905): 220.

19. "Tuberculosis Nurses Named," *Baltimore Sun*, March 30, 1909, 14; "Nursing News and Announcements," *American Journal of Nursing* 9, no. 10 (July 1909): 781; "Nursing News and Announcements," *American Journal of Nursing* 10, no. 6 (March 1910): 434; and "To Fight Tuberculosis," *Baltimore Sun*, Dec. 24, 1909, 6.

20. Articles appeared in early 1911 in the *Washington Post, Arizona Republic*, *Pittsburgh Daily Post*, and numerous other papers.

21. "Tuberculosis Nurses at Work," *Baltimore Sun*, Jan. 4, 1910, 14.

22. "The Charm of Kissing," *Baltimore Sun*, Jan. 13, 1910, 4. The article was also reprinted in numerous other papers.

23. "Department of Visiting Nursing and Social Welfare," *American Journal of Nursing* 12, no. 5 (Feb. 1912): 419–20; and "Department of Visiting Nursing and Social Welfare," *American Journal of Nursing* 13, no. 3 (Dec. 1912): 201.

24. See the list of La Motte's publications included in this volume for further information about these and other articles.

25. The organization was founded in June 1912. Annie M. Brainard, *Evolution of Public Health Nursing* (Philadelphia: Saunders, 1922), 337–38.

26. James Bosley to Mrs. Ernest Amory Codman [Katherine Codman], Sept. 21, 1911. All correspondence about this position is in the Instructive District Nursing Association of Boston Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University (hereafter BU).

27. Elizabeth King Elliott to Katherine Codman [Sept. 1911], BU; Mary Lent to Katherine Codman, Sept. 14, 1911, BU; and Lillian D. Wald to Katherine Codman, Sept. 23, 1911, BU.

28. Ellen N. La Motte to Katherine Codman, Sept. 26, 1911, and Oct. 3, 1911, BU.

29. "Sipped Tea; Talked Suffrage," *Baltimore Sun*, Jan. 11, 1910, 7; "Suffrage Talks in Parlors," *Baltimore Sun*, Jan. 15, 1910, 8; "Why Women Want Votes," *Baltimore Sun*, Jan. 16, 1910, 12; and "For Cleaner Streets," *Baltimore Sun*, Jan. 30, 1910, 8.

30. "'Give us Votes!' The Cry," *Baltimore Sun*, Feb. 17, 1910, 9.

31. "Says Politics Sways Courts," *Baltimore Sun*, October 28, 1910, 14.

32. "She Flays the Tariff," *Baltimore Sun*, Jan. 9, 1910, 9.

33. Gertrude W. Peabody to Katherine Codman, Sept. 8, 1911, BU; "Suffragists Are Active," *Baltimore Sun*, June 1, 1910, 8; "Says Politics Sways Courts," 14; and "The Just Government League of Maryland," *New Voter* 1, no. 5 (Jan. 16, 1911): 39.

34. "Suffragists Address Socialists," *Baltimore Sun*, Nov. 20, 1911, 12.

35. La Motte to Amy Wesselhoeft von Erdberg, Dec. 19, 1911, Correspondence to Amy Wesselhoeft von Erdberg, Ellen N. La Motte files, JHMI. In 2013 a series of sixteen letters La Motte sent to Amy Wesselhoeft von Erdberg, between December 1911 and August 1916, was donated to the Johns Hopkins' Chesney Medical Archives. For a discussion of the letters see Alice Kelly, "The American Friends." Following the convention established in "American Friends," Amy Wesselhoeft von Erdberg is hereafter referred to as Wesselhoeft.

36. La Motte to Wesselhoeft, Dec. 19, 1911.

37. La Motte to Wesselhoeft, Dec. 19, 1911, and Dec. 23, 1911, JHMI.

38. La Motte to Wesselhoeft, March 20, 1912, JHMI.

39. "News Notes," *Johns Hopkins Nursing Alumnae Magazine* 5, no. 3 (Aug. 1906): 140; and La Motte to Wesselhoeft, Nov. 22, 1913, JHMI.

40. Mary E. Lent and Ellen N. La Motte, "The Present Status of Tuberculosis Work among the Poor," *Maryland Medical Journal* 52 (April 1909): 147–60.

41. "Suffragists Address Socialists," 12.

42. "Miss Lent under Knife," *Baltimore Sun*, Feb. 15, 1913, 14; and "Miss La Motte under Knife," *Baltimore Sun*, July 21, 1912, 12.

43. Mary Goodwillie to Katherine Codman, Sept. 12, 1911, BU; and La Motte to Wesselhoeft, Dec. 23, 1911.

44. La Motte to Wesselhoeft, March 20, 1912.

45. "For Votes for Tax-Paying Women," *Frederick (MD) Post*, Feb. 16, 1912, 4; and La Motte to Wesselhoeft, March 20, 1912.

46. "March Like Men," *Baltimore Sun*, June 29, 1912, 20; "1,000 Suffragettes Parade," *New York Times*, June 29, 1912, 2; and "Suffragette Parade Will Outshine All," *Jackson (MS) Daily News*, June 27, 1912, 1.

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48. It is unclear to what extent she participated in the long march. "News Notes," *Johns Hopkins Alumnae Magazine* 12, no. 2 (July 1913): 97; and "To Rest in Baltimore Feb. 27," *Baltimore Sun*, Jan. 21, 1913, 5.

49. "Miss La Motte Plans to Nurse Militancy," *Baltimore Sun*, June 15, 1913, part 4, 8; "News Notes," *Johns Hopkins Alumnae Magazine* 12, no. 2 (July 1913): 96; "Nurse to Join Militants. Hospital Chief Leaves Baltimore for Thick of Fray," *Houston Post*, June 8, 1913, 1; and "Nurse Will Fight with Suffragettes," *Oakland Tribune*, June 8, 1913, 18.

50. "Miss La Motte Plans to Nurse Militancy," part 4, 8.

51. "Miss La Motte Plans to Nurse Militancy," part 4, 8.

52. "Miss La Motte Plans to Nurse Militancy," part 4, 8; and "Bombs for Miss La Motte," *Baltimore Sun*, June 24, 1913, 6.

53. "Ellen La Motte on London's Suffragette Problems," *Baltimore Sun*, June 20, 1913, part 4, 1.

54. Ellen N. La Motte, "While Britain Prays, Her Militants Sing Their Hymns of War," *Baltimore Sun*, July 27, 1913, part 3, 1.

55. Josephine Grasett, "Attacks Ellen La Motte on Her London Letter," *Baltimore Sun*, Aug. 3, 1913, part 3, 1; part 4, 1.

56. Mary Richardson, letter to the editor, *Baltimore Sun*, Aug. 29, 1913, 6; and La Motte, "While Britain Prays," part 3, 1.

57. See the list of La Motte's publications in this volume for information about the six articles.

58. Ellen N. La Motte, "Wherein Miss La Motte Forces Man to Assume Silly Position," *Baltimore Sun,* August 31, 1913, part 3, 5.

59. Ellen N. La Motte, "Ellen La Motte Insulted on Crowded London Street," *Baltimore Sun*," Sept. 28, 1913, part 3, 2.

60. La Motte to Alfred I. duPont, Jan. 22, 1919, Alfred I. duPont Papers, Special Collections, Leyburn Library, Washington and Lee University, Lexington, Virginia (hereafter WLU).

61. La Motte to Wesselhoeft, Oct. 31, 1913, JHMI.

62. La Motte to Christabel Pankhurst, Oct. 19, 1913, Manuscript Division, British Library. La Motte also mentions Pankhurst in her Oct. 31, 1913, letter to Wesselhoeft.

63. La Motte to Wesselhoeft, Dec. 25, 1913, JHMI.

64. Howard A. Kelly diary, Feb. 6, 1914, Howard A. Kelly Collection, JHMI; and La Motte to Wesselhoeft, March 2, 1914, JHMI.

65. La Motte to Wesselhoeft, Oct. 31, 1913,

66. Ellen N. La Motte, *The Tuberculosis Nurse: Her Function and Her Qualifications* (New York: Putnam, 1915), 283–84.

67. "Books and Magazines," *Harrisburg (PA) Telegraph*, Dec. 16, 1914, 8. This column appeared prior to the book's publication.

68. M. E. Cameron, "Book Reviews," *American Journal of Nursing* 15, no. 10 (July 1915): 893.

69. La Motte to Wesselhoeft, April 11, 1914, JHMI.

70. La Motte to Wesselhoeft, April 11, 1914, and May 6, 1914, JHMI.

71. La Motte to Wesselhoeft, April 29, 1915, JHMI.

72. La Motte to Wesselhoeft, June 11, 1914, and May 6, 1914, JHMI.

73. La Motte to Wesselhoeft, June 11, 1914.

74. La Motte to Wesselhoeft, June 24, 1914, JHMI.

75. La Motte to Wesselhoeft, June 11, 1914, and June 24, 1914.

76. "Miss La Motte Off for War," *Baltimore Sun*, Oct. 24, 1914, 8.

77. She departed New York on October 24, 1914, and started work at the hospital on November 7, 1914.

78. The essay is included in this volume.

79. La Motte to Wesselhoeft, March 14, 1915, and April 29, 1915, JHMI; and "Work Too Easy in Paris," *Baltimore Sun*, July 11, 1915, 4.

80. Ellen N. La Motte, *Peking Dust* (New York: Century, 1919), 42; and La Motte to Wesselhoeft, March 14, 1915.

81. La Motte to Wesselhoeft, Feb. 28, 1916, JHMI.

82. La Motte to Wesselhoeft, March 14, 1915.

83. "Notes Dictated by Margaret Crane-Lillie Gildea," Sept. 1978, Crane and Lillie Family Papers, Research Center, Chicago History Museum (hereafter CHM); Thomas L. Chadbourne, *The Autobiography of Thomas L. Chadbourne* (New York: Oceana Publications, 1985), 33–34, 59, 228; and "One Marriage as the Result of Two Divorces," *Leavenworth (KS) Times*, Dec. 4, 1906, 3.

84. Robert S. Nelson, "The Art Collecting of Emily Crane Chadbourne and the Absence of Byzantine Art in Chicago," in *To Inspire and Instruct: A History of Medieval Art in Midwestern Museums*, ed. Christina Nielsen (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2008), 132–48; Anna Gruetzner Robins, "'Manet and the Post-Impressionists': A Checklist of Exhibits," *Burlington Magazine* 152, no. 1293 (Dec. 2010): 783; and Andrew Martinez, "A Mixed Reception for Modernism: The 1913 Armory Show at the Art Institute of Chicago," *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies* 19, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 40.

85. Chadbourne donated the works between 1918 and 1957. Nelson, "Art Collecting of Emily Crane Chadbourne," 132.

86. From an article, "London Social Leader Revisits Former Home," reprinted in Kate Crane Gartz, *The Parlor Provocateur* (Pasadena, CA: Mary Craig Sinclair, 1923), 25.

87. From a letter dated March 9, 1912, quoted in Mary Prentice Lillie Barrows, "Frances Crane Lillie: A Memoir," an unpublished and undated manuscript, Wheeling Historical Society and Museum, Wheeling, Illinois, 97.

88. La Motte to Wesselhoeft, March 20, 1912.

89. La Motte to Wesselhoeft, March 14, 1915.

90. For more about Lillie, see Barrows, "Frances Crane Lillie."

91. For more about Crane Gartz, see *Parlor Provocateur*; Upton Sinclair, "We Get Arrested a Little," *Liberator* 7, no. 63 (July 1923): 20.

92. Barrows, "Frances Crane Lillie," 118, 124.

93. "Notes Dictated by Margaret Crane-Lillie Gildea," CHM.

94. DuPont to La Motte, Oct. 3, 1930; La Motte to duPont, June 24, 1932; and duPont to La Motte, Dec. 24, 1934, all in WLU.

95. "Of Vermont Interest in Washington," *Burlington Free Press*, March 12, 1932, 2.

96. Lea M. Williams, for example, uses both phrases. Williams, "Ellen N. La Motte," 86n137; and Lea M. Williams, "La Motte, Ellen Newbold," *American National Biography Online*, April 2014, http://www.anb.org/articles/13/13-02684.html.

97. "Notes Dictated by Margaret Crane-Lillie Gildea," CHM; Gertrude Stein, *Selected Writings of Gertrude Stein*, ed. Carl Van Vechten (New York: Random House, 1972), 149.

98. The novelette was originally intended to be published during World War I, but it first appeared in 1951, in *Envoy: An Irish Review of Literature and Art*. Gertrude Stein, *Reflection on the Atomic Bomb*, ed. Robert Bartlett Haas (Los Angeles: Black Sparrow, 1974), 16–30; and Edward Burns, ed. *The Letters of Gertrude Stein and Carl Van Vechten, 1913–1946* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1986), 1:808.

99. Gertrude Stein, *Useful Knowledge* (1928; Barrytown, NY: Station Hill, 1988), 88–89.

100. La Motte to Stein, Aug. 7, 1925, and June 15, 1925, YU.

101. La Motte's postscript, Chadbourne to Stein, Feb. 14, 1934; and La Motte to Stein, Dec. 20, 1934, YU. Edward Burns, Ulla E. Dydo, and William Rice, eds., *The Letters of Gertrude Stein and Thornton Wilder* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 344; and Burns, *Gertrude Stein and Carl Van Vechten*, 1:408.

102. La Motte to Alice B. Toklas, July 28, 1946, YU.

103. During the war, she was known by her married name, Mary Borden-Turner.

104. For more information about the hospital, see this volume's introduction, under the heading, "Ellen N. La Motte and Other Nurse Writers."

105. Mortimer, *Green Tent*, 56–57; and "Hôpital Mobile No. 1," 232.

106. The essay, published in November 1915, is included in this volume.

107. Chadbourne to Stein, June 28 [1915], YU.

108. Chadbourne to Stein, Aug. 4, 1915, YU.

109. Stein, *Selected Writings*, 160.

110. Chadbourne to Stein, September 3 [1915], YU.

111. Chadbourne to Stein, October 15 [1915], YU.

112. Chadbourne to Stein, Dec. 19 [1915], YU; and Mary Lent to Alfred I. duPont, Feb. 3, 1916, Alfred I. duPont Office Files, Correspondence 1916, "Lent, Mary E." file, Nemours Estate, Wilmington, Delaware (hereafter Nemours).

113. Lent to duPont, Feb. 3, 1916, and Feb. 12, 1916, Nemours.

114. La Motte to Wesselhoeft, Feb. 28, 1916.

115. She applied on Oct. 11, 1915. Roll 0224-Certificates, Sept. 28, 1914, to Oct. 14, 1914, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.

116. Chadbourne to Stein, Feb. 20, 1916, and March 16 [1916], YU.

117. The essay is included in this volume.

118. Stein, *Selected Writings*, 149–50.

119. Gerard Colby, *Du Pont Dynasty: Behind the Nylon Curtain* (New York: Open Road Media, 2014), chap. 8; and John K. Winkler, *The Du Pont Dynasty* (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1935), 231.

120. Lent to duPont, Feb. 21, 1916, Nemours.

121. A copy of the boat's manifest is among the shipping records of New York's Ellis Island.

122. La Motte to Wesselhoeft, Aug. 17, 1916, JHMI.

123. La Motte to Wesselhoeft, Aug. 17, 1916.

124. Chadbourne to Stein, Aug. 4, 1915, YU; and La Motte to Wesselhoeft, Aug. 17, 1916.

125. *Department of State Emergency Passport Applications for 1916*, vol. 11 and 12, RG 59, National Archives, Washington, DC.

126. Chadbourne to Stein, Sept. 1, 1916, and Sept. 30, 1916, YU; La Motte to Stein, Sept. 10, 1916, YU; Ellen N. La Motte, *The Opium Monopoly* (New York: Macmillan, 1920), xi; and La Motte, *Peking Dust*, 4, 8.

127. Ellen La Motte, "The Ruins of Angkor," *Harper's Magazine*, Feb. 1920, 365–77.

128. La Motte, *Peking Dust*, 13, 77.

129. La Motte, *Peking Dust*, 24, 200–201.

130. La Motte, *Opium Monopoly*, ix–xi.

131. Stein, *Selected Writings*, 160.

132. "'The Backwash of War,' by Ellen La Motte," 110.

133. DuPont to La Motte, Feb. 8, 1918, WLU.

134. DuPont to La Motte, Feb. 8, 1918.

135. For a more detailed discussion of this topic, see the introduction to this volume, under the heading, "Publication, Reception, and Censorship of *The Backwash of War*."

136. La Motte to duPont, June 30, 1918; Aug. 1, 1918; and Dec. 4, 1918, WLU.

137. La Motte to duPont, Jan. 22, 1919, WLU.

138. Ellen N. La Motte, *Civilization: Tales of the Orient* (New York: Doran, 1919), 185.

139. "Books and Their Writers," *Louisville (KY) Courier-Journal*, Aug., 25, 1919, 4; and "Short Stories and Novels," *Los Angeles Times*, June 22, 1919, 35.

140. In April 1920, she applied for a new passport and indicated that she planned to depart in early June and visit the three countries, as well as France. *Department of State Passport Applications, Roll 1159; April 16 1920–April 17 1920;* National Archives, Washington, DC.

141. Ellen N. La Motte, "The Christmas Boat," *Harper's Monthly*, March 1930, 494.

142. See this volume's list of La Motte's publications for information about these articles.

143. Her visit was reported in publications ranging from the *China Monthly Review* to the *Baltimore Sun*, which ran the news under the subheadline "Last Visitor Hopkins Nurse," Jan. 24, 1922, 9.

144. La Motte to duPont, April 6, 1924, WLU.

145. *Establishment of Two Federal Narcotic Farms: Hearings Before the Committee on the Judiciary on H.R. 12781*, 70th Cong., 1st sess. (Washington, DC: GPO, 1928), 86.

146. La Motte to duPont, Dec. 2, 1928, WLU.

147. The article, dated June 3, 1928, is reprinted in *Establishment of Two Federal Narcotic Farms*, 224–26.

148. "Reviews of the New Books and News of the Bookmen," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 23, 1925, 11.

149. Robert S. Nelson, *Hagia Sophia, 1850–1950: Holy Wisdom Modern Monument* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2004), 169; and Ellen N. La Motte, "A Coronation in Abyssinia," *Harper's Magazine*, April 1931, 576.

150. "Three Widows" was published in March 1931, and "A Coronation in Abyssinia" was published in April 1931.

151. Evelyn Waugh, *Remote People* (London: Duckworth, 1931), 44.

152. DuPont to La Motte, Nov. 25, 1931, WLU.

153. Chadbourne to Stein, Feb. 14, 1934, YU.

154. "Refuse to Prosecute Embezzler of $450,000," *Logansport (IN) Pharos-Tribune*, Dec. 11, 1937, 9; "Notes Dictated by Margaret Crane-Lillie Gildea."

155. La Motte to duPont, April 13, 1932, WLU.

156. Ellen Newbold La Motte, "Why I Am Going to Vote for Roosevelt," *San Antonio Light*, Oct. 25, 1932, 5A.

157. DuPont to La Motte, April 11, 1933, La Motte, Ellen N., file, Nemours; and La Motte to duPont, Jan. 7, 1934, WLU.

158. La Motte's postscript, Chadbourne to Stein, Feb. 14, 1934; La Motte to duPont, Jan. 29, 1934, WLU; duPont to La Motte, Feb. 17, 1934, WLU. Apparently, the article for *Fortune*, which La Motte described in her letter to duPont on January 29 and he mentioned in his reply on February 17, was never published.

159. La Motte to duPont, June 30, 1934, and July 14, 1934; and duPont to La Motte, Oct. 6, 1934, all in WLU.

160. La Motte to Stein, Jan. 20, 1936, YU.

161. "Stone Ridge," *Kingston (NY) Daily Freeman*, July 13, 1937, 4.

162. La Motte appears in the photo of the ceremonial signing event, included in this volume.

163. Jane Eads, "Washington Daybook," *St. Cloud [MN] Times*, Dec. 7, 1951, 4.

164. "Notes Dictated by Margaret Crane-Lillie Gildea," CHM; Patricia Watson, *Crane: 150 Years Together* (Stamford, CT: Crane, 2005), 74–77.

165. "Notes Dictated by Margaret Crane-Lillie Gildea," CHM.

166. "Notes Dictated by Margaret Crane-Lillie Gildea," CHM; and La Motte to Katherine Hasbrouck, March 21, 1956, in a private collection.

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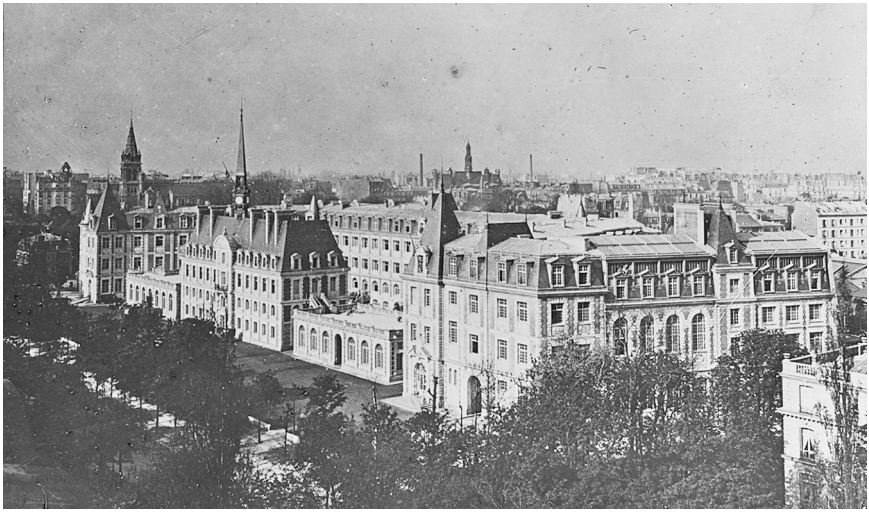
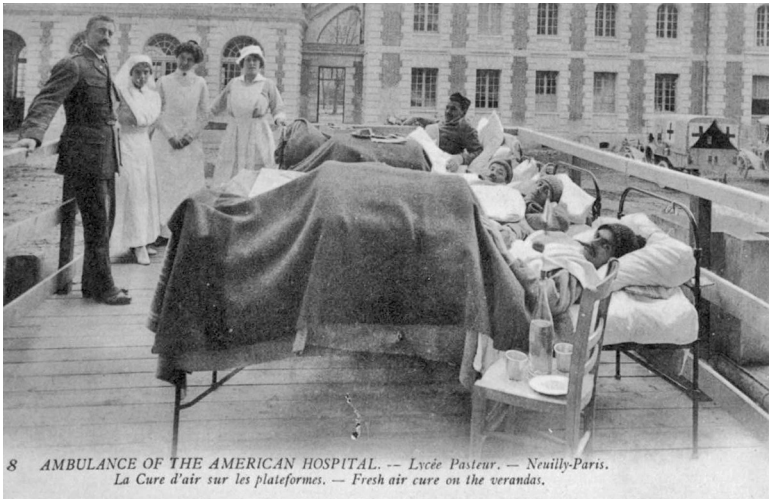
Ellen N. La Motte, probably while she was attending the Johns Hopkins Hospital Training School for Nurses in Baltimore, Maryland, from 1899 to 1902. *Courtesy of the Alan Mason Chesney Medical Archives of the Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions.*

Ellen N. La Motte, featured in an article titled "Woman To-Day" in *Collier's* magazine in 1910, after she was appointed director of the Tuberculosis Division of the Baltimore Health Department.



The American Ambulance at Neuilly, the military hospital in Paris where La Motte volunteered in late 1914. The newly constructed building had been designed as a high school, but at the start of the war, it was converted into an American-sponsored hospital. *Courtesy of the Warren Anatomical Museum in the Francis A. Countway Library of Medicine.*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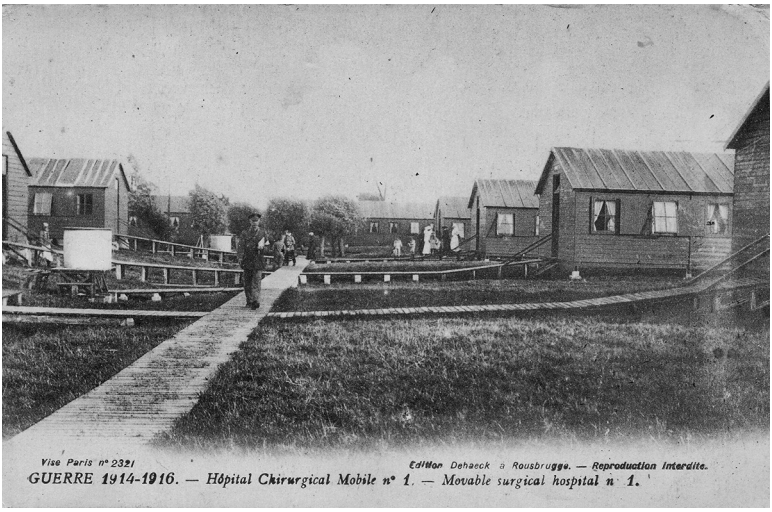
Patients receiving the "fresh air cure" on a veranda of the American hospital in Paris. *War-era postcard courtesy of the Center for the History of Medicine, Francis A. Countway Library of Medicine.*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Hôpital Chirurgical Mobile No. 1, the field hospital at Roesbrugge, Belgium, described in *The Backwash of War. War-era postcard in a private collection.*

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Visé Paris
Hôpital Chirurgical Mobile N° 1. Intérieur des Salles.
Temporary hospital. Inside of the wards.

Inside a ward of the field hospital in Roesbrugge, Belgium, Hôpital Chirurgical Mobile No. 1. *War-era postcard in a private collection.*

Patients and nurses outside a ward of the Hôpital Chirurgical Mobile No. 1, with donated umbrellas. *From Agnes Warner,* My Beloved Poilus *(St. John, NB: Barnes, 1917).*

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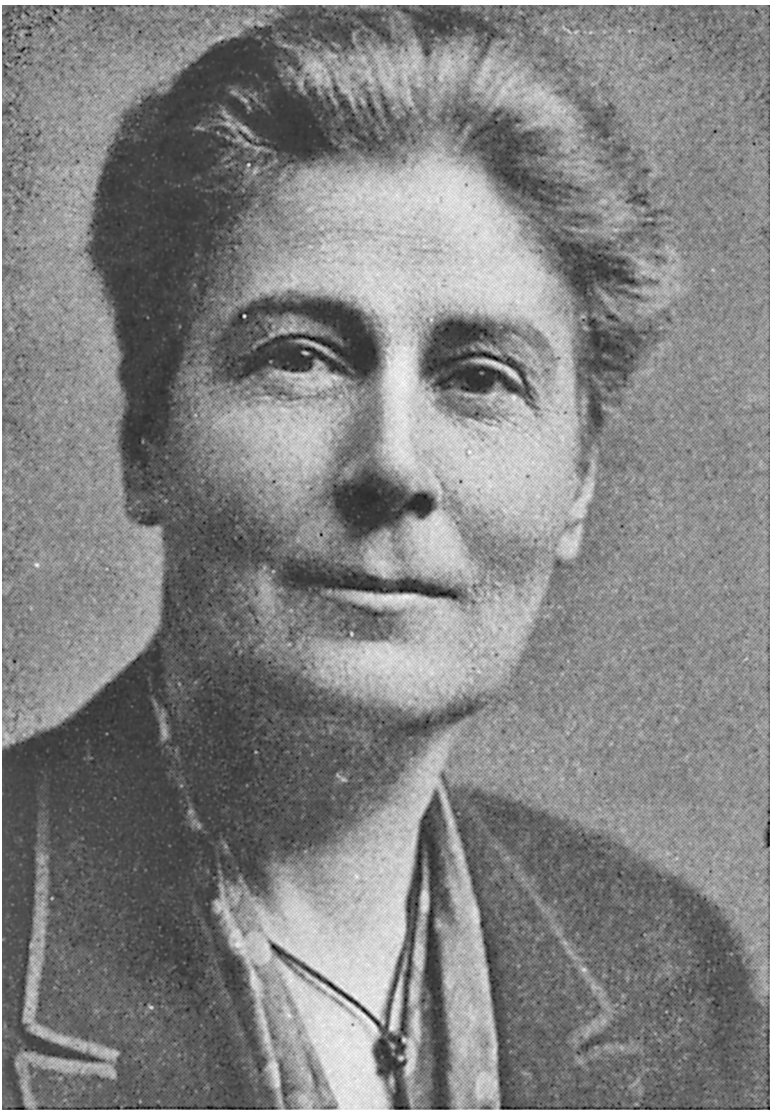
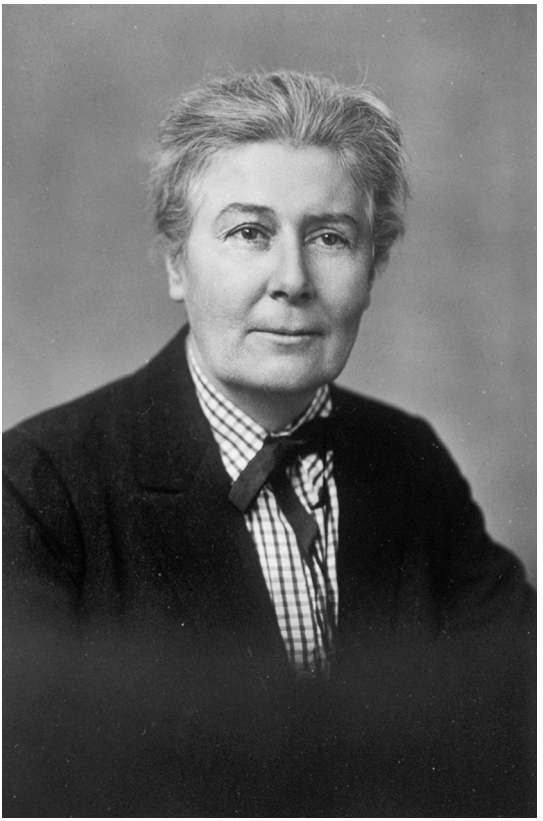
Ellen N. La Motte in summer 1916. She had just completed *The Backwash of War* and was about to embark on a nearly yearlong trip to Asia with Emily Crane Chadbourne. *Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration.*

Emily Crane Chadbourne in summer 1916. Her relationship with Ellen N. La Motte would span more than forty-five years. *Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration.*



Ellen N. La Motte in an undated photograph. *From Meta Rutter Pennock, ed.,* Makers of Nursing History *(New York: Lakeside, 1940).*

Ellen N. La Motte posing in early 1928 with her rare pet, a black cockatoo from New Guinea. *Courtesy of the Prints and Photographs Division of the Library of Congress.*



Ellen N. La Motte in an undated photograph. *Courtesy of the Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.*

Ellen N. La Motte (standing fourth from the right) at the ceremony incorporating the World Women's Party in 1938. *Courtesy of the Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.*